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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

"HOUNDED"

by

Frank Blighton

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THE EDITOR.

HOUNDED

by

Frank Blighton

CHAPTER ONE

"BAD NEWS" ABOUT TOMMY!

TRADITIONS concerning Tommy Trevor's deft hands extended back to the days when he was barely weaned. On that occasion he repaired a damaged fire engine for Mary Malone, two years younger than himself—and Mary felt more grief over the damage to the toy than the passing of her father, a city fireman, who died a hero's death about the same time.

Tommy Trevor was not yet eight when his fond mother explained to the other dwellers in the "model tenement" on a side street just off Tenth Avenue that "he took the alar-rum clock all to pieces, when it wouldn't run—and there it is, on me mantel now, runnin' better than it iver did!"

"Well, he comes by thim hands honestly," averred the Widow Malone. "Yer own hands ain't so ba-ad, Mrs. Trevor. No wan but yersilf kin take thim grimy waists, wid no more to 'em than a butterfly's wing, turn thim out of the tub clane as new, and iron them until they're betther than new!"

And it was even so. Mrs. Trevor was a laundress "par excellence."

No one around this tenement section, while the great world loomed and buzzed and rattled and roared, ever dreamed that the day would come when Thomas Trevor would stand in the prisoner's dock in a criminal court in a far-off city for robbing a country bank in a manner at once ingenious, scientific and daring.

It all came out the day of his sentence. The former friends and neighbors of Mrs. Trevor, who read the amazing headlines flaring up at them from the first page of a New York evening newspaper, were at first stunned then grieved—but, withal, a little proud, too.

YOUTHFUL BANK ROBBER
PLEADS GUILTY!

THOMAS TREVOR, TENEMENT WAIF, ADMITS "JOB" WAS PERPETRATED BY HIMSELF ALONE

Lad of Seventeen Looted Safe With Ease—Worked Unseen, Behind Painted Screen, and Burrowed Through Side, Netting Rich Haul

That was not all of the story, but it was practically all that the papers gave beside

the sentence imposed. Hence, it formed the basis of the discussion among those who had known the rollicking boy from the time he was born.

These women gathered there, a motley group, with the Widow Malone and Mary, her daughter, and Mrs. Murphy and Mrs. O'Sullivan and Mrs. McCann, just at twilight, to talk it all over.

"Well, fer wan thing," said Mrs. McCann, striving for a crumb of comfort, "Tommy's name is in bigger letthers tonight, and on th' first pa-age, too, than the prime ministers that's still growlin' at each other over in Yurrup!"

"How long does the pa-per say the judge give 'im, Mary?" queried Mrs. Malone of her daughter.

"Five years!" said the fair-haired girl, her brows frowning above her pansy-blue eyes and her cheeks flaming with her Irish blood at the shame of it all. For Mary was now fifteen, just as Tommy was barely seventeen, and they had played together on that same block since they were both babies. Mary, in her heart of hearts, was "right fond" of Tommy and she wanted, very much, to cry just then.

"Foive years!" softly sibilated Mrs. Murphy. "Th' good Lor-rd save us! That judge must have a flinty hear-rt! And Tommy nothin' but a boy!"

Mrs. Murphy began rocking again, this time as if in unison with the tick of the little alarm clock, still bravely measuring out seconds, minutes and hours, owing to the deft ministrations of the absent boy's hands years before.

"Well," opined Mrs. McCann sagaciously, "he'll still be a young man when he gets out. If only they don't hound 'im. The cops always look up a la-ad that's been in prison, onct he gits out, if anything goes wrong."

"Yis," echoed Mrs. Murphy, "and thim that's in prison is wur-rse than the cops, sometimes. You nivir can tell what wan of thim ma-ay do. The good Lor-rd save 'im, onct he gits out, if a convict ivir starts houndin' 'im!"

And in that sentiment Mrs. Murphy was entitled to a medal for prophecy, although she was totally unaware of it at the time.

CHAPTER TWO

HOW TOMMY "WENT WRONG"

MEANWHILE the object of this joint mixture of pride, commiseration and surprise was lying in jail at Vonsburg, which was part of the same ancient structure as the courthouse.

On the chair by Tommy's bunk a cheap watch was also ticking away, synchronized with seconds, minutes and hours, the same as those recorded by the still dependable alarm clock then recording the flight of time in Mrs. Murphy's far-off "apartment."

He was thinking of his present deplorable plight and the strange sequence of events which had led up to it. Some he understood. Some he admitted to himself were his own fault. Others he felt were not his fault, and the blazing resentment of one manipulated, imposed on and betrayed, mingled with the unutterable sorrow that brooded over his dire situation and himself.

While working in Sam Upperly's blacksmith shop at Sandbury, first as a helper and next as an apprentice tool-maker, the native gift of magic in his dexterous, pliant fingers and the aspiration that flamed high in his boyish heart, had led him to invent a unique device. He also made the tools that made it, and he made the device itself, in "his own time," while working in the shop and at the forge.

He spent on this work practically all his small savings. Being without much ready money, Tommy took the device to Jacob Holman, the village banker, where he had a "savings account." The banker seemed much impressed by the invention and its possibilities. So he financed the patent for Tommy. Then Mr. Holman organized a company, which acquired the patent, giving it the sole right to manufacture the inven-

tion, and Tommy had been given an interest in the concern. It was all in stock.

And then, just as he was getting ready to realize his hope of comparative affluence, dreaming of "blowing back to little old Noo Yawk," hunting up Mary Malone and taking her to the theatre and to rides in his own car out over the seductive hills of the country beyond, Tommy fell from the sapphire pinnacles of his mental heaven into the lowest and most mephitic depths of a mental hell!

The device he had invented was to prevent automobiles from being stolen. The banker who had "financed" it had made and marketed a few. But another company, with a far inferior article, had seized upon the new invention, examined it, and, realizing its possibilities, had worked the old, familiar trick of "buying out the majority stock interest" in the concern owning it.

The banker held that "majority stock interest." Rumor had it that he had received fifty thousand dollars cash. Tommy was thus in possession of nothing but his dream, except a few slips of gaudily lithographed green and gold paper—his "minority interest" in the stock of the first company.

He tried to sell this also to the same concern buying the banker's stock. They were polite but adamant. Then he went to a lawyer in Sandbury, good old Squire Benson. Benson showed Tommy the capitalization of the company which had taken over his invention from Holman.

It was an enormous concern. It had many inventions for autos. It was a company whose stock was even traded in on the Exchange. The good old squire likewise patiently pointed out to Tommy that, while the "big fish" had gobbled up the "little minnow" of his company, it need never pay a dividend, either on the stock it had bought from the banker nor on what Tommy had in his pocket.

"I really think they bought it up to put it outta business, sonny," concluded the old attorney.

"I guess," said Tommy, as he folded the certificates and put them carefully away in his pocket, "that I've been gyped."

"It wuz sharp practice on old Jake Holman's part," admitted the attorney, mentioning the banker's name for the first time during the interview. "But he's within the law, sonny. Kain't tech him! He had jest as much right to sell his stock as I have to sell my law books."

"How much do I owe you, Squire?" asked Tommy Trevor.

"Fer this advice? Well, seein' how I kain't do you much good, I'll make it light. Five dollars!"

Tommy paid him and went out.

Then and there he determined to "get even." If he'd been gyped by a clever, plausible and wealthy man, he'd "gyp him back again." He went to work in the blacksmith shop and never uttered a syllable about his experience, save to remark to occasional sympathizers:

"I've still got my stock!"

The rest was already history. Starting one Saturday afternoon behind a screen made of beaver board and colored to look like the side of the safe, that shielded him from view of the passers-by on the sidewalk, Tommy Trevor worked patiently with silent feverishness at the side of the "old box" that held the Holman bank's funds. It was a rich little country bank, too, and held an unusually large sum of money on deposit over the week end.

It was two o'clock Sunday morning when Tommy was ready for the last phase of his work. He had drilled and ripped off the sheet steel side, scraped out the fireproofing and was down to the "burglar-proof" steel box itself at that hour. He let himself out of the side door of the bank.

Over a convenient trolley wire he looped a heavy bit of cable, after putting on rubber overshoes and rubber gloves. With the electric arc and blow-pipe, using "juice" from the trolley, he cut through the interior in ten minutes. He stepped within. He counted out exactly twenty-five thousand dollars. Then he stepped out and into the star-lit night with a new and unwonted sense of exultation, after taking off the cable from the wire.

He had "squared things."

But in so doing he had stepped into the

far-flung arms of justice and the strictly scientific meshes of the law.

Tommy intended to return the acetylene welding outfit and tools to the shop. The special tools he had made to destroy the safe he intended to throw into the river back of the shop. But as he discovered the dim lanceheads of the dawn, already softening the sky in a faint glow in the east, and as a rooster lustily announced the portent of another day, even then coming on velvet feet over a still somnolent world, he grew panicky.

So he returned only the acetylene welding outfit to its accustomed place, stole homeward, and placed the $25,000 in his "telescope," which also held his stock interest in the now defunct concern, snatched a few hours of sleep, and then went to work as usual on Monday morning.

Sam Upperly complained of feeling ill that morning. Tommy handled the business of the shop with dexterous dispatch for three whole days.

The fourth Sam didn't come to work at all. The same morning the sheriff of the county appeared with a stranger at the blacksmith shop.

"This is Detective Bruce Carver," said that ponderous official, "who repretents an association of bankers. The bank here is a member of the association. He wants you to come uptown to have a little talk with you."

Tommy doffed his apron, "washed up," put on his coat and walked to the bank without a word. He did not see Jake Holman there—only the detective.

On a table were a lot of charts and photographs.

The detective looked Tommy over silently. Tommy thought he had seen this man somewhere before. But the fleeting idea was quickly lost in the situation which immediately arose.

"You are under arrest," the sheriff told Tommy when the door of the bank had closed behind them, "on suspicion of robbing this bank of $25,000."

Tommy looked first at one and then at the other of them. He said nothing.

"If Mr. Carver is wrong," said the sheriff, "we'll know it in just a minute, Tommy. Step over to this table."

Tommy complied. The detective pressed his fingers on a sheet of blackened paper and then on a white sheet. Then he began writing words that meant nothing to Tommy, such as "tented arches, whorls, ridges and loops."

These he compared with the photographs. He nodded to the sheriff. The latter arose and said: "Well, Tommy, I'm dretful sorry, but you'll have to go over to the county seat with me and this gentleman."

Tommy went. In the sheriff's office Carver looked him over again, so Tommy thought, as if in some bewilderment. He was not mistaken. The sleuth was puzzled, not at Tommy's guilt, but at his youth. He had gone to the Upperly house while the sheriff went to the station. He had found the money and rejoined them on the trip to the county seat.

The officer exchanged a quick glance with the sheriff in the latter's office, after the prisoner was "booked." The sheriff rose laboriously.

"Feed-up time, Mr. Carver," said he. "I've got to go out and see the other prisoners git their supper. See you later!"

He strode ponderously out of the room.

CHAPTER THREE

IN THE GRIP OF THE LAW

"TOMMY," said the detective, "you have a wonderful pair of hands."

The prisoner gazed steadily at his captor. Irish to the core, he would not allow one sign of the misery rankling within him to appear on the surface. He laid both hands on the table and regarded them with a rueful but dogged gaze. Also he kept silence.

"Wonderful hands," repeated Carver. "The hands of a genius. Why, I've never seen a pair of hands quite like yours in all my life."

"Huh!" grunted Tommy.

"Never," went on Carver emphatically,

"and I'm from the town where you once lived, too, Tommy. I'm from New York."

"A dick, eh?" sneered Tommy, although the face of Mary Malone, with her mop of yellow hair and her pitying eyes, flashed into view with mention of his birthplace.

"I used to be a patrolman over on Tenth avenue," went on Carver, his brows knitting, "and I'm sure I have seen you when just a kid playing on the side street. Then I went to police headquarters; then I went to war, and after the war I went into business for myself. Yes, Patrolman Mike Casey and I used to pound the pavement right where you lived one time. Mike works for me now, and I work for bankers."

"Well," said Tommy, feigning a stolidity he was far from feeling, "what of it? I'm here, ain't I, and you helped to nab me, didn't you, with all them words about my fingerprints?"

"You have wonderful hands," repeated Carver, removing his cigar. "Too wonderful to do things like this. Why didn't you take all the money, instead of only twenty-five thousand? There must have been a reason. Now, the grand jury is sitting in your case. They'll indict you to-night. If there was a reason, when they call me for a witness I might——"

Tommy's right arm made a gesture of scornful dissent.

"You said you worked for the bankers, didn't you?" he interpolated. "Well, I ain't got no use for bankers. That'll all I gotta say. I s'pose they'll give me a stiff jolt. The bankers kin afford to hire lawyers; I ain't got a dime."

"There must have been a reason," reiterated Carver, "and while it was my duty, as a detective employed by the association, to hunt you down and recover that money, nevertheless if there was a reason——"

Tommy's brain fairly reeled between righteous wrath and indecision. Wrath won. A banker had robbed him. Why should he tell a smooth-tongued "dick," who worked for Jake Holman and the other bankers, anything?

"Take me in and lock me up," said he morosely but determinedly.

Carver sent for a deputy sheriff. He left town that night, but was back when Tommy was arraigned for pleading to the indictment three days later. With the district attorney was another lawyer. He, too, represented the bankers, and when Tommy's firm plea of "Guilty!" was read this lawyer arose and addressed the court.

What he said was, in some ways, quite complimentary to Tommy. He pointed out the wonderful hand-made tools, the skillful way the safe had been scientifically demolished.

During his remarks Tommy's lips curled scornfully, although the stern gaze of Judge Pullham was full upon him.

"Has the district attorney anything to say?" inquired the judge when the "special prosecutor" for the association of bankers had finished his plea.

District Attorney Wayne rose.

"There seems to be no reasonable doubt whatever, Your Honor, that the prisoner, Thomas Trevor, committed this crime at the village of Sandbury, where he was employed as a blacksmith's helper and an apprentice tool-maker. His plea of guilty saves the State the expense otherwise incident to his trial, but he had practically no recourse.

"The money he took was found when he was arrested. In the same receptacle where he had hidden it was also found a scientific book describing in detail the operation of the electric acetylene torch, with which, by a blow-pipe, he ordinarily made welds in the shop. He took this apparatus from the shop and demolished very quickly an otherwise strongly built safe.

"He is a young and unlettered man, but a most dangerous and adroit one. Detective Carver, who investigated the case for our association and who arranged for his arrest, says that he has a most wonderful pair of hands.

"I am sorry, very sorry, that a youth of his years should employ such genius as he possesses in tool-making and such knowledge as he has gained from scientific study to undeniable criminal ends. That is all, Your Honor, except Detective Carver has pointed out that he only took a small part of the money when he might have taken it

all. I have no idea whatever why he did this. The same officer has also ascertained that the prisoner has no previous arrests or convictions to his discredit. He is simply a tenement waif from New York."

"Have you anything to say, Trevor?" asked Judge Pullham.

Tommy straightened defiantly.

"Not much," said he clearly. "The law is for bankers, ain't it? A poor guy ain't got no chanst wit' a banker. I'm a poor guy. I have got good hands, though, and some day, when I'm out again, I'll know how to use 'em better."

CHAPTER FOUR

HEADED FOR PRISON

"YOU make my duty very hard indeed," began Judge Pullham after a long pause. Tommy's statement was susceptible of two meanings, but his apparent defiance created the implication that it was a threat. "How old are you?"

Tommy stood mute.

"Do you not realize that the incriminating fingerprints left on the tools you made with your ingenious hands fastened this crime on you remorselessly ere your identity was otherwise known?"

"I didn't at the time," said Tommy with refreshing candor, "but I do now."

"There are no other prints like those in the world," went on the judge. "The detective who traced and caught you told me that. He said you had 'wonderful hands.' He wondered why you had turned to crime. He said there must have been a reason, but that you refused any and all explanation to him."

Tommy's heart suddenly grew faint.

The county seat at Vonsburg, where he now was, was 60 miles from Sandbury, where Holman had "gyped" him. He realized, with a sense of fresh and more acute misery, that he had made an error in not explaining to Carver the circumstances. He opened his lips to explain then and there, but the judge, who had made a short pause, misinterpreted his intention.

"Silence, sir!" he thundered. "You have had your opportunity to address this court. Whether through ignorance or defiance, you have maligned the operation of the law. You have stated that it was 'for bankers,' and not for 'the poor man.' I am very sorry that your apparent lack of early parental training should have bred in you such an oblique view and disrespect for authority.

"Your extreme youth, however, inclines me to compassion; and since you have pleaded guilty and all the stolen money has been recovered, I now sentence you to merely five years at Danforth prison at hard labor, subject to the usual commutation laws of this State for good behavior."

As Tommy was taken out he saw a young man writing at a table. The chap looked at him with something like sympathy.

"Who's dat guy?" he asked the deputy sheriff on the way back to jail.

"Him? Oh, that's Judge Pullham's son Billy. He's a newspaper reporter and correspondent for the New York papers. Young, but bright."

"Huh!" said Tommy, with a feeling of fresh desolation. But he did not know that Detective Carver just then was telling the reporter to "omit all reference to fingerprints" in his despatches telling of the sentence.

Tommy only knew that after a restless night he was taken next day to Danforth. It was a long, dreary ride. The first sight of the grim gray walls struck into his heart a terrible foreboding ere he entered the massive gate a doomed man.

He was not even unhandcuffed until in the office of the principal keeper.

That official, a gruff-voiced man with a heavy gray-streaked mustache and a pair of fierce blue eyes set in a very red face, receipted for him, just the same as if he had been so much "blacksmith's coal."

"Stand up to that desk and empty out all your pockets!" he directed. Tommy complied.

"Walk over and face that wall under the clock. Fold your arms. Don't turn around until you're told to."

Tommy obediently faced the blank, white-

washed space. He placed one of his "wonderful hands" under each armpit.

"Turn around," commanded the keeper presently, "but keep your arms folded. Walk through that door and across the yard to the wash-house."

Tommy looked at the clock on the whitewashed wall above as he complied.

Its two hands stood at the hour of high noon.

CHAPTER FIVE

"IN THE POGIE"

TOMMY took an odd bath. He stripped and stood out under the nozzle of an enormous hose in the middle of a big room with a cement floor. Another convict manipulated the hose. The windows were barred. Through them he could see the landscape outside. Flowers grew wild, trees waved their branches, the sun played hide-and-seek and the birds darted to and fro.

Meanwhile the keeper accompanying him went through his clothes, even examining the tips of his shoes. The result was negligible. New underclothing, socks, prison brogans and an ill-fitting uniform of black and gray, with a round cap of the same material and much too large, were given him.

Then he went to the photographer and his front face and side face, without the uniform, were taken, with a hateful cardboard number hanging just below his chin; and then next to a prison barber, who deftly clipped his hair all off and gave him a shave.

Then he went to the hospital and was examined by the doctor of the prison. Next to another department, where a tall, angular young man in blue uniform and brass buttons bade him describe all the marks on his body. "If you leave off a scar it means the loss of ten days good time," he warned the prisoner.

"I've got a bad cut on me knee," said Tommy.

"Let's see it!"

It was noted with great care, measurements being taken.

Then they sat him in a chair and measured his spine and head, also the length of his arms, legs and feet, and all the fingers of the hands.

Last of all he was ushered into another room. Here was a prisoner with a wedge-shaped face and mottled eyes, with yellow streaks through the white. He had his long hair combed neatly, however, his shoes were polished and his uniform, with white and blue stripes, neatly ironed and starched, much resembled a tennis suit, only the stripes ran horizontally instead of vertically.

"Take this chap's fingerprints, Loft," directed the keeper of the identification room.

Tommy submitted to the odeal. He had no option. But the face of the other convict was not unfriendly. When the two keepers withdrew to the other room, Convict Loft whispered:

"How long a stretch are you doing?"

"Five years," said Tommy, glad of a human voice that was half kindly.

"You're clever, but foolish," said Loft. "You had a crack at more than a quarter of a million, so the newspapers said, but you only took twenty-five thousand."

Tommy blushed.

"What did you do to come here?" he asked, a little timorously.

"Me?" said Loft. "I'm a peter-man, too. A safe-robber," he explained, noting Tommy's mystified face. "But I never left a penny behind—and they didn't get me until I'd done five jobs, at that. Now, let me wise you up before you go down into the prison.

"Don't talk to anybody. You'll never know when a stool-pigeon is talking to you—see? All the long-time men, except a few, are snitchers. They always try to get something on a new prisoner and then snitch on him. They'd see you in the dungeon for ten days on bread and water to get ten days extra good time themselves—get me?"

"Yep," said Tommy. "Much obliged. I'll need all them days of good time myself."

"That's the idea," said Loft. "Now, I'm what they call a 'politician' up here. That means I have some privileges. The guys

down in that bull-pen think I've got a political pull. I haven't. But I've had a good education and been a student even while here, and I know this fingerprint game. So I'm up here with the keeper of this department, helping him on the prison records. I get good food, I sleep in a cell, of course, but I don't lock in until twelve o'clock every night, and I'm out at six in the morning. I'm out all day Sundays, too. Now, watch your step, kid. I'll come around and see you sometimes, maybe."

"You're awfully kind," said Tommy, "and I'm—well, I'm much obliged. The grub is bad, ain't it?"

"The worst ever," said Loft, looking at him keenly. "But I'll trundle you down some coffee and a can of condensed milk, maybe, in a week or so. You can boil the coffee in a tin cup over your lamp, but don't get caught at it. The coffee and the bread won't be bad. There's guys in this dump that would sell their souls for a drink of coffee—real Java, I mean. Good-by and good luck."

"Good-by," said Tommy as he walked back into the room where the keeper having him in charge was chatting and smoking with the other official.

Then he went to the hall-keeper.

"What's your trade?" asked this official.

"I'm a tool-maker," said Tommy.

He was assigned to a cell in Company 5 in the "old hall" at Danforth, given a book of prison rules to study, and came out during the first three days only at "exercise hour." Then he paraded with other prisoners up and down across a large cinder-paved inclosure. The alert guards were out of their little houses on the high stone walls, their ready rifles held nonchalantly but surely.

The fourth day Tommy went into the weaving shop.

The monotonous clash of shuttles banging back and fourth was some relief to the deadly ennui of the narrow cell. A man next to him tried to talk to him when picking up a broken thread. Tommy ignored him. The rules prescribed silence.

Saturday came. This was also one of the exercise days and for an hour Tommy again enjoyed the golden flood of sunshine. Then he went to his cell.

That night Loft came with a letter.

"I see you've got a sweetheart," said he.

Tommy looked at the missive. It had been opened and read.

"I also have charge of the correspondence for this hall," explained his mentor, as if reading his mind. "If you don't like to have your letters opened, why, we keep them unopened, but you don't get them until the day you're discharged. Here, sign this. It is a permission to open all your mail."

Tommy complied.

"And," said Loft urbanely, "here's that can of milk, some sugar and a bag of Java. Read this stiff, to-morrow, and give it to the waterboy on his second trip during the afternoon. Be sure to give it to him, for another friend of mine gets it every Sunday."

Tommy took the packages. The "stiff" proved to be a very recent New York daily newspaper. He read it that night instead of the following day. It was forbidden—that newspaper—and Tommy wanted to obey the rules and "make his good time." It contained good news, too.

GOVERNOR SIGNS NEW PAROLE LAW

FIRST OFFENDERS MAY OBTAIN RELEASE WITHIN TEN MONTHS, BUT ONLY CONDITIONALLY

He brewed himself his "Java," and then drank it with the really excellent bread, meanwhile reading the letter. It was from Mary Malone, and couched in terms of such kindness that Tommy could have wept.

Mary was "sticking." She even told him of what Mrs. Murphy had said about the "cops" hounding him, when he got out! Tommy determined then and there that he would not be "hounded," because he would provide no occasion for it.

"Detective Carver made us a call," said the girl's note. "He didn't understand how you came to get into trouble at all. Neither did mother, Mrs. Murphy, the McCanns or the O'Sullivans. They all said you had al-

ways been a good boy. He was very nice, and mother remembers him very well. He was a policeman on the beat here, and knew my father when you and I were just kids, Tommy. Good-by and write soon."

CHAPTER SIX

"NEWS" FROM "OUTSIDE"

TOMMY stayed in the weaving department just two months.

One day a loom broke down. The keeper was dismayed. The machine was next to Tommy's and both were weaving the coarse sheeting that was used in other institutions throughout the State.

Keeper Barton was wroth. He had a big order to get out. He took off his cap and scratched his head desperately, fuming at the clumsiness of the operative.

Then he looked around. His eye lighted on Tommy's loom, reeling off yard after yard of cloth with unfailing regularity. In fact, Tommy almost always exceeded his quota by more than a few yards.

"Can you fix this loom?"

"I'll try, sir."

"Go to it. I'll put this dub on your machine."

Tommy speedily located the trouble. It was a broken cam. He took it off and the shaft to which it was attached with a monkey wrench and showed it to Barton. The keeper frowned.

"That means waiting for a new part! Blast the luck! This has to happen just when my shop is rushed with orders."

"If you want it fixed, I think I can fix it, sir," said Tommy.

"How?"

"It can be welded and machined so as to fit back into place."

Barton at once telephoned for the principal keeper. Tommy again impersonally explained the difficulty to the principal keeper and the way to remedy it.

Barton then spoke: "We have no welding machine in the prison, have we?"

"No," said the principal keeper slowly, "but up the road about a mile from the gate is a chap that repairs autos and he has a lot of 'doo-dads' around his shop. I'll send this man."

Fifteen minutes afterward the front gate opened at sight of a pass written and signed by the all-powerful principal keeper. Also he waved to the gate-keeper from the "front office." Tommy, with another "screw" (as the reserve guards were termed in prison slang), was in an auto and riding up the highway to the civilian repair shop almost immediately.

In an hour they were driving back. Tommy had fabricated the weld, and then turned up the part on the lathe and carefully rubbed it with "grits" until he was sure it would work again. He took it to the shop and replaced it in its accustomed place.

The loom started slowly under the eyes of the principal keeper and of Keeper Barton. Tommy presently had it reeling off cloth at full speed as surely as if it had never been broken.

In his cell that night Tommy found a slip of paper reading:

"Convict Thomas Trevor, No. 6465, is hereby awarded ten days extra good time for services of worth to the State."

The principal keeper's signature was beneath it.

A week later he was promoted to the job of "general utility repairman." They gave him a pass. It entitled him to go from one department to another of the prison on demand. They next gave him "hospital meals," he was "unlocked" on Sundays and other "privileges" given him. In a few weeks the magic hands that had gotten him into such a frightful mess were aiding him to ameliorate his condition very much.

All of the time he kept a still tongue in his head.

One night Loft came to his cell with another letter from Mary Malone and a "stiff." Under the prison rules Tommy could only write once a month, and this letter he sent Mary Malone.

"Something on the financial page may interest you," said Loft. "That is, unless it's another Trevor."

Tommy read the marked paragraph.

"The Atlas Scientific Auto-Appliances Corporation are meeting with tremendous success in the new 'thief-proof' auto device they have just begun marketing. Sales are beyond factory capacity. It is the invention of a man named Thomas Trevor. This fact explains the bulge in the company's stock in the market yesterday. It rose 4 points and closed strong."

Tommy reeled. The name of the concern was the same that old Squire Benson had shown him in Sandbury. He took a long breath, unaware that Loft was keenly watching him outside the cell.

He closed his eyes. But the tear, unbidden, would well out of his tightly shut lids, and it rolled down his cheek. He blindly pushed the paper back to Loft, who said nothing at all regarding the item.

But as the visitor to the cell moved off he remarked:

"The doctor told me to-day that the X-ray machine in the hospital is out of kilter. Know anything about electricity, Tommy?"

Tommy "took a brace," cleared his throat, and replied with a little of his old, intrepid spirit:

"Sure, I know a lot about it. Didn't I cut that bank box apart in Sandbury wit' it? Didn't I make an electric weld up the road for a busted loom-cam since I came here, and then machine it, to save buyin' a new part?"

"I mentioned your name to the doctor," said Loft, smiling. "I think he'll send for you in the morning. The X-ray machine is in a room just back of mine. There's a communicating door between it and the fingerprint department. If you come up I'll make a cup of gen-u-wine Java, and we'll drink it and have a good smoke—eh?"

"We'll do that little thing—that is, provided we don't bust any rules," agreed Tommy. "So long, old pal!"

He turned back to his cot. That hung on a hinge with a chain at each end. There was a little three-legged stand in the corner, a shelf for his tin lamp and some kerosene in a can—extra kerosene, for Tommy had asked and received permission to read scientific books at night for two hours after the "lights out" order at nine o'clock.

For the first time since that dreadful interview with Old Squire Benson Tommy now thought of his "stock." Unused to legal ways or wiles, something within him still assured him that that stock was not so valueless as he once thought it was.

For the first time he also remembered that he had left it in his room at Sam Upperly's house, the Sandbury blacksmith with whom he had worked and lived. Mentally Tommy resolved to ask for an "extra letter" on the following day to write to Mr. Upperly and ask if the stock was still there.

He pondered the matter deeply. Into his thoughts came a memory of Bruce Carver, the detective. If Carver had known Mary Malone's father, then Carver couldn't have been such "a bad skate" himself when "pounding a beat" on Tenth avenue. Carver worked for bankers. Maybe he would aid him, since he was also a friend to Mary Malone.

"I'll ask Loft to get me the permission to write to Sam Upperly," thought Tommy, "for he ain't a bad skate, either. At least he's always been good to me!"

And with that, still pondering the "news from the outside," Tommy Trevor fell asleep.

Next morning Tommy sat bolt upright as the prison siren was sounding and it was time to get up.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WITH DEATH IN HIS HANDS

TOMMY realized the kindly friendship of Loft more than ever when the prophesied call came from the hospital. Dr. Bracebridge sent for the youthful prisoner with the deft hands. He indicated the X-ray, which he said had "broken down."

"Do you think you can fix it?" said he.

"I'll try, sir. I must locate the trouble first. Will you please place the tube in circuit and throw on the switch?"

The tube sparked but did not light. They

tried another tube, brand new and known to be in perfect condition.

"There's a 'short' in the coil, sir," said Tommy. "I'll have to unwind and rewind it, I think. Will you get the necessary pass from the principal keeper? There's a fine, speedy lathe up at the auto repair shop."

The matter was arranged. But the principal keeper could not spare a keeper to go with the convict. Dr. Bracebridge smiled.

"Let's put him on his honor," he suggested. "He doesn't look like a bad sort."

The principal keeper's fierce blue eyes softened a little in his red face, and he twisted his mustache. Then he looked at Tommy.

"Will you go up and telephone me back—and come back?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go ahead."

With a strange exultation buoying him up, Tommy was wafted through the front gate. He found a waiting "flivver," which the guard at the gate indicated. He put the huge coil into it and started for the shop. After he arrived he telephoned back to the principal keeper.

"Fix it up soon's you can and then come back," said the gruff voice at the other end of the wire.

It was easier said than done.

At six he phoned that he had finished the work, revarnished the coil and was ready to start back.

The principal keeper was at the gate when he arrived. Tommy asked for a "helper" to carry the coil to the hospital, as he wanted to "run a stick through the center of it, for the varnish on the surface was not yet quite dry."

The principal keeper sent up for Loft and the coil was brought up to the X-ray and operating room and stood on end. Then the principal keeper acceded to the doctor's request to have Tommy "counted out" until midnight, so that the job might be completed that evening, as he wished to X-ray a convict whom he feared had an internal disorder the first thing in the morning.

Tired but happier than he could have ever dreamed that he would be in the dreaded Danforth prison, Tommy enjoyed a substantial meal with Loft in the latter's room. The coffee was especially good. Then Loft produced cigars and in the ensuing chat, while the varnish hardened on the coil, Tommy requested permission to write to Samuel Upperly, at Sandbury, the coveted "extra letter." Loft asked why he wanted to write.

"I want to find out what's become of my stock," said Tommy. "You see, I'm the Thomas Trevor that invented the thief-proof auto device that this big Atlas corporation is now marketing."

Loft nodded. His eyes twinkled.

"How much did you get out of it?" he asked.

"Not a dime!" exploded Tommy. "Old Jake Holman, the banker, he gyped me outta the hull thing with sellin' out his stock. The Atlas people wouldn't buy my stock, not for any price. They told me so, too."

"You poor fool of a kid! You botched things up terribly. Don't you see—you're a convict now, and in prison. Your word, after you get out, under the law, isn't much good against Holman's." A cunning look came into his eyes. "You'll never get a cent out of him, unless you pull another job like that. And that would be very dangerous, Tommy, for you've been finger-printed now, and unless you wore gloves—well, of course you can have the extra letter to write to Mr. Upperly, and——"

Tommy shrugged. "There ought to be some way for the law——"

He did not finish the sentence. A reverberating roar came from the "east hall" down in the prison below. Then a series of oaths, pistol-shots—pandemonium. The prison was supposed to be "locked up." The guards were "off the wall." Nevertheless roars of exultant rage, whoops, banging of buckets and pans against barred cell doors—all came upward in a cacophony of utter fiendishness.

"A crush!" cried Loft, dropping his half-smoked cigar and striding toward the telephone.

"Who's being crushed?" quavered Tommy, while the appalling din still rose and fell in strident waves.

"Somebody's 'crushing out' of here—an

escape!" Loft jerked the words over his shoulder as he reached for the receiver. "Shut that door!" he commanded.

Tommy complied. Then he heard Loft's suave but clear accents:

"Principal Keeper Roberts? This is George Loft speaking, sir. There's a riot in the old hall. I think a 'crush' is on. All right, sir!"

Tommy afterward had a series of swift scenes indelibly impressed on his avid and awe-struck eyes. First, Loft jangled the alarm bell to the guard room; then, followed by Tommy, the older convict rushed out to the great open court, hemmed in with stout wire, and watched the procession of guards with loaded rifles hastily snatched up as they poured from the guard room, two floors below, across the court and toward the door to the east hall. But the door was locked. Tommy saw corks in the ends of the rifles and wondered why. He asked Loft:

"To keep them from getting rusty in the guard room safe," muttered that convict, his wedge-shaped face pale, his eyes blazing with excitement. Then the principal keeper himself dashed after the keepers hurrying to the east hall, a drawn pistol in one hand and a bunch of keys in the other. As that official almost reached the door a shot reverberated from behind the bars and the principal keeper staggered. Then he returned the fire, first with his right hand, through the grated entrance, and with his left inserted the keys, flung wide the portal and reeled into the hellish fight.

Loft suddenly turned on his heel and started toward another part of the hospital.

"May—may I go with you?" asked Tommy.

Loft nodded wordlessly. They came to a window. The room was lighted, but Loft pushed a button immersing them in total darkness.

Beyond, under the shimmer of a young moon, stretched a section of the top of the east hall and at its far end a section of the prison wall. On the summit of this stood a convict. He had a rifle in his hands. The vicious stab of orange fire that blurted from its muzzle showed to Tommy Trevor that The escaping man had death in his hands, and that he did not hesitate to hurl it!

CHAPTER EIGHT

WITH LIFE IN HIS HANDS

TOMMY was galvanized into an unwonted rigidity. He saw the man on the wall suddenly seize a pendant rope from the guard house and slide down it, hand-over-hand, after dropping the weapon to the ground outside ahead of him. Then the convict who had made his "crush" went out of view.

"This way—come on, Tommy!"

In the darkness the half-hypnotized lad followed his friend and mentor. They came out of the darkened room, sped down a lighted hall and into a ward filled with beds, mostly occupied with men wearing bandages. Across this Tommy Trevor followed George Loft as if in a trance.

The keeper of this surgical ward was already at the window peering out, his pistol in his hand. He muttered an oath and fired. Then he cursed again.

"Too far!" said he.

Tommy dimly discerned a figure working its way steadily toward the dark belt of trees on the hill above Danforth to the north. Then streaming around the corner of the prison wall below the hospital came the reserve guards, led by the principal keeper. The principal keeper snatched a rifle from the foremost man. Tommy only saw the fragments of the cork vanish. The figure near the woods tottered and fell prone. Two more guards rushed forward. The angry "blurt" of the rifle in the escaping man's hands spoke sharp and defiantly—twice more. Tommy heard the thud of one bullet below him on the bricks.

Then Loft's voice shrilled: "He's hit the principal keeper!" Tommy looked again. The burly figure of Principal Keeper Roberts was wavering, then he sagged unsteadily to the ground.

Loft gripped his shoulder.

"Let's get back to the X-ray room," said

he. "Don't say anything about being out of there—it might cost us both some good time."

"I'm mum!" said Tommy hoarsely as they sped back.

He hurried at once to his task of replacing the core in the huge coil. He had just completed this when the door burst open and with two convicts and two keepers carrying him the principal keeper was brought in. Blood gushed from his mouth. Behind them came Dr. Braceridge with the head nurse, also a convict, and with other prisoners of the hospital staff, already bearing trays of instruments, bowls and bottles of various solutions and all garbed in clean white clothing. One grasped the doctor's uniformed coat and hat and whisked it away; another garbed the physician, also in spotless white, even to a white cap over his hair; a third "soused" a pair of rubber gloves up and down in a sterilizing solution.

Then the convict aides and nurses stripped the man on the table, who moaned feebly.

Dr. Braceridge leaned over and felt his pulse.

"Give me that adrenelin solution and syringe," said he calmly.

He made a swift jab into the burly chest of the wounded official.

Then his quick eye roved over to where Tommy was just inserting the coil in the machine. In two strides he was by the young convict's side.

"Trevor," said he quietly, but with a slight trace of huskiness in his voice, "Mr. Roberts trusted you to-day. Now he must trust you again! How long before you can have that X-ray ready to make a photograph?"

"In a jiffy, sir!" replied Tommy, with a phlegm he was far from feeling at the present time.

"Good!" said the doctor. "Loft, get plates and be ready to place them where I tell you. Then work as you never worked before to get me a speedy negative. I must see where that bullet has lodged that entered his head."

Tommy's facile, dexterous fingers seemed endowed with a new and more marvelous sentiency than ever before. He worked fast and sure, until he twisted the last connection into place with his wrench. Then he ran to the fuse-box on the side of the wall, after connecting up the X-ray tube on the flexible stand, and quickly inspected the interior.

"Ready, doctor!" said he, as his hand reached for the huge switch handle.

Loft ran into the room carrying a photograph plate enclosed in a light-proof holder. Dr. Braceridge signaled to the head nurse.

"Hold his head up while Loft slips that under!" he directed. Then to Trevor: "Throw on the current!"

In a trice the cathode tube was blazing with its fantastic flames. But their invisible potency, penetrating flesh, tissue and muscle, burrowed instantly through the patient's head and left their record on the plate beneath.

"Enough!" called the doctor. "Now, Loft—hurry!"

Loft seized the plate holder. The doctor felt the patient's pulse. Then he called for a stethoscope and listened to the stricken man's heart throb.

Almost immediately he next lifted the patient's right arm. An ugly gash showed where the bullet fired through the hall door had buried itself. This wound bled profusely as the surgeon probed it dexterously. Then a faint smile flitted over his face. He dropped the probe, raised the arm higher, touching the muscles of the upper arm on the other side with a delicacy that even Tommy Trevor envied. "Hold this arm up," directed the surgeon. His ready eye roved toward the instrument pan. He picked up a sharp knife, made a deft slash and more blood spurted. Then, with tweezers, Dr. Braceridge plucked the first bullet from the arm.

"It missed the bone," said he, as if speaking to himself. "Antiseptic solution, wash thoroughly, pack with gauze on both sides and bandage."

Loft re-entered the room holding a drip-

ping negative and thrust it before a high-power electric lamp. Dr. Braceridge stooped to look through it. Then he straightened. Tommy, glancing over his shoulder, could see the black, blurred shadow of the ugly missile which had entered the right side of the principal keeper's head, ranging downward and across to lodge in the left side of his throat.

Dr. Braceridge carefully sponged out the stricken man's mouth. Then he deftly extracted the bullet, dropped it into a pan and began staunching the hemorrhage, with tweezers and needles, using silk thread. Bandages followed. A rolling cot was wheeled to the table.

With great care the body of Principal Keeper Roberts was placed on it and trundled out, vanishing toward the ward where Tommy had witnessed the final shooting. The tumult in the hall below had long since died out.

Presently Dr. Braceridge came back. His assistants were already removing all traces of the emergency operations. One man came in with a scrub-bucket to cleanse the floor. Tommy saw that he was an Indian.

The physician sank into a chair while his aides removed his white garments. Then he washed his hands, carefully. Suddenly the clock in the next room tolled the hour of twelve.

Drying his hands, Dr. Braceridge smiled faintly at Trevor.

"That was close work," said he. "Thanks to your promptness in getting that machine into shape, I had no difficulty in locating that second bullet."

"Will—will Mr. Roberts live?" asked Tommy, trying to steady his voice.

"Live?" echoed the surgeon. "I'll say he'll live. He may be deaf in that right ear for a while or permanently, but he'll be about his work in two or three weeks. Not even a vocal cord was injured, although his false teeth were knocked into a cocked hat in his lower jaw. It takes more than two bullets to kill a veteran of the Civil War, Trevor. Well, here's the hall-keeper looking for you. Good-night!"

CHAPTER NINE

BACK "ON THE BLOCK"

Tommy wrote to Samuel Upperly the following evening on the single sheet of paper given him. At the top he put his name and prison number. The letter was very brief. Tommy asked his former employer to "go through his things" and see if the stock was still there. If it was, to "please write and he would send instructions."

He intended to send the reply to Mary Malone, and to tell Mary to ask Detective Bruce Carver to look into the matter. Since Carver "worked for bankers," he might know how to deal with one who had "gyped" Tommy. His reasoning went no further than that. He saw Loft put the letter in to mail and he saw the bag go out of the gate to the train that ran, twice daily, to and from Danforth prison back to the great roaring, clattering world of free people.

In the next two weeks no reply came. But he had another surprise before the week was out. Detective Bruce Carver came to the prison. It was then that Tommy learned, for the first time, that four men instead of one had "gone over the wall." All were long-term men, and the chap who had shot Principal Keeper Roberts was James Wilson, a noted "peter-man," who was under a sentence of life imprisonment.

Carver met Tommy as he was entering the gate. Tommy doffed his cap, respectfully, but as prison rules forbade conversation with any visitors, he could do no more. Later on Loft came to the machine shop, where Tommy was turning up a broken connecting rod, after re-welding it, to replace on one of the prison engines.

"You're wanted in the warden's office," said he. "Detective Carver wants to talk to you."

Tommy hurried back with Loft.

"Wise up, kid," muttered the older convict. "Don't spill too much to this smooth dick. He's a clever guy—but, remember, you told me he helped to put you where you are, for he works for bankers, don't he?"

"Oh, I'm wise to that," said Tommy. "Thanks, just the same."

Detective Carver, however, said little. He told Tommy that Mary Malone was "asking for him." So he had promised to call on the youth when coming to Danforth.

Loft came in during their rather aimless chat.

"Here's the fingerprints of those four escaped men," said he pleasantly, "their Bertillon records and prison photographs."

"Thank you," said the detective.

Loft tipped Tommy a warning wink as he left.

"I wisht," said Trevor to the detective, "that you'd help me out in a little matter."

"What is it?" queried the detective. "To get out of here?"

"Oh, no, sir. That's my own fault. I'll take my medicine. But I took some stock from a banker onct for an invention of mine, and got gyped. I'm tryin' to see if I can locate the stock. If I can, I'll send it to Mary Malone, and I wisht you'd advise me how to handle the matter, for it's in a company that another company sold out to—that is, my company did—I mean the one in which I had this stock. Now, the new company is makin' a barrel of money outta what I invented——"

The detective nodded, not unkindly.

"All right, Tommy. I'll do that, when you tell Mary to ask me. Just now I'm very busy. Got to catch these chaps that got away from here — the fingerprints, you know!"

He tapped the packet significantly. Tommy nodded.

Loft again strode over the cinder-paved yard, when the third week had passed after Carver's visit.

"The principal keeper wants to see you," said he.

"Is he out?" gasped Tommy.

"Three days ago," said Loft somewhat curtly. "Say, Tommy, if you should——" He stopped suddenly, and then spoke no more until they came into the guardroom.

Tommy took off his prison cap.

"Good-morning," said he, a smile lighting up his eager, boyish face. "I sure am glad to see you out again."

The principal keeper nodded. Then his searching blue eyes scanned Tommy's face.

"You've been around the prison a good deal," said he. "Have you any idea where those fellows that escaped got those guns?"

Tommy's eyes opened wide.

"You mean the night they made the escape?"

"Before that," said the principal keeper, almost harshly.

Tommy shook his head, and kept shaking it in a continued negative, without taking his gaze from the other's face.

"Honest, Mr. Roberts, I never heard a thing about it. I was knocked flat when it come off. I wasn't in the prison much that day—don't you remember, you put me on my honor, and I went up the road to the auto shop to re-wind that coil for the X-ray which had busted on the doctor?"

The principal keeper again inspected him searchingly. His fierce blue eyes seemed to bore Tommy through.

"That," said he slowly, "was why I asked you, Tommy. You were the only unguarded prisoner outside the walls that day, except the warden's gardener."

"Mr. Roberts," said Tommy earnestly, "if you was to send me right home now if I could tell you, I couldn't tell you a thing. You was at the gate that night when I brought in the coil, remember?"

"Yes. Well, Tommy, I am going to put a new suit on you."

"What's the new suit for, sir?"

"My boy, if I was to turn you out of the front gate in time to catch that afternoon train to New York, how'd you ever get home in those stripes?"

"You—you mean I'm pardoned?" asked the incredulous youth.

"No, but the governor has issued you a conditional parole under the new law, to take effect today. The warden and doctor recommended it, for the doctor said you helped to save my life. Don't ever come back here again, will you?"

He put out his hand. Tommy grasped it.

At nine o'clock next morning Mrs. Murphy sat rocking herself on the Widow Malone's doorstep. Some one stepped along the street toward her.

Mrs. Murphy was stupefied.

"If it ain't Tommy Trevor, then it's his ghost a-walkin' along the block," she muttered. Then Tommy walked up to her, smiling.

The tumult of home-coming, the wild joy of seeing his old friends, especially Mary Malone, quite made Tommy forget that his release was conditional until just after nightfall, especially as he had so much to tell about how he got "in Dutch."

The same evening two broad-shouldered and broad-shoed men came to the apartment just as Tommy was telling Mary and her mother, in the kitchen, the dramatic episodes that followed one after another the night four convicts escaped, none of whom had yet been recaptured. Mrs. Murphy, on the porch, as usual, nodded at sight of the visitors. She hurried to tell Mrs. Malone.

"Th' po-leece," she whispered sepulchrally. "They want Tommy."

They did want Tommy. They followed the old woman into the kitchen, uninvited and without waiting to see if Tommy would come out. They were McGovern and Marshall, two Central Office detectives.

They gave Tommy "the Brooklyn"—that is to say, a long, wordless stare, looking him up and down. Tommy looked at them with an inward foreboding, but he gave no sign of it.

"Well," said McGovern at last, "I suppose you know what we're here for?"

CHAPTER TEN

SHADOWED

"I'M a bum mind-reader," retorted Tommy. "What do you want?"

"Your parole requires you to report to headquarters once a week," said McGovern.

"A week is a long time. I've just got home."

"You're supposed to go to work, too," cut in Marshall.

"I'm goin' to work, and when I get a job I'll tell them at headquarters," said Tommy. "Then, I suppose you'll tell my boss I'm an ex-convict, eh?"

"Don't get fresh," growled McGovern.

"Don't get fresh your own self," flamed the boy. "Now, I know all about you 'dicks.' Lay off'n me or I'll go straight to the biggest newspaper in this man's town and tell my little tale. And you'll both see your names under a big headline, 'Hounded.'"

"Oh, you will, eh?" growled Marshall.

"You bet I will," flashed Tommy. "It's the likes of youse guys that make a man go back to prison. This town is full of crooks. Why don't you go out and grab a few of 'em? I never pulled anything off here, did I?"

They slouched out without replying.

One of the O'Sullivan girls later on brought word that they were watching the house from a garage about a half-block up the street on the other side.

"Never moind, Tommy," said the Widow Malone."

"They've got nothin' on me, nothin' at all," sturdily returned the boy, "and they've got to go somewhere else to get anything on me. I'm going to call on Mr. Carver tomorrow. He ain't a bad skate, at all, that feller. I've got some business wit' him, anyway, an' I'll ask him to help me git a job."

True to his word, he looked up the detective's address in a phone book early the next morning and started for his apartment, which was just in the rear of the Hotel Bavaria. Enroute Tommy looked over his shoulder once. He saw one man following him, who wore a derby hat and carried an umbrella, tightly rolled, for the morning was murky, hinting a storm. Across the street, wearing a straw hat and also carrying an umbrella, was another man. Both wore the broad-toed shoes of men much on their feet.

To make sure, Tommy stopped once and pretended to scan the wares in a candy and soda store on the corner. In the sheen of the glass he could see the other man across the street also pause and signal with his umbrella to the chap on the same side of the street that Tommy was. He pretended he didn't see either, walked in and bought a glass of root beer. Then he came out again. He was puzzled. He could not make out

why he should be "hounded" the instant he came home.

He approached Carver's apartment and went up to the floor he occupied.

A man with a pronounced limp answered his ring.

Tommy gave his name and inquired after the detective.

"Come in," said the other man. "My name is Casey, Michael Casey—Clutch Casey for short. Mr. Carver's out of town on business. I'm his chauffeur. What can I do for you?"

"Well," said Tommy, "I wisht he was here. I'm just out of Danforth prison. Two plainclothes guys was houndin' me last night and two more is houndin' me today. I wanted to see Mr. Carver on some private business and I wanted him to help me git a job."

"Where are they now?" asked Casey.

Tommy described the men. Casey went to the curtain over a window and very cautiously studied the street below.

"Yep, they're both parked in the hallway just across the street," said he, "and, what's more, they're pipin' off this place. What did you say your name was?"

"Thomas Trevor."

"Sit down a minute. I'll be back directly." Casey went into another room and took down Carver's scrapbook. He read the rather lurid press accounts of the young man's arrest for the bank robbery. He put the book back for a while and pondered the matter. Then he returned to the room.

"You're handy with tools, it seems?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you fix the differential in the rear end of a car?"

"I never did, but Mr. Carver said I had a wonderful pair of hands."

Casey wrote out an address and signed a memorandum attached to it.

"Mr. Carver's car is in that garage. My overalls is under the driver's seat. Here's the keys to it. See what's the matter with the rear end."

Tommy thanked him and sped away. He took a street car to an east side garage and paid no attention to the men, who still dogged him.

It was near nightfall when Tommy had finished the job, cleaned up, and returned to the detective's apartment to give Casey the keys.

"Mr. Carver phoned in this afternoon," said Casey. "I told him I'd put you to work. He said to keep you to work. Now, my advice is for you to go downtown to the detective bureau to-night, ask for Inspector Lacey, and tell him you're just out of Danforth and working for Mr. Carver as a mechanic. That will ease you off, if anything will."

"Thanks," said Tommy; "I'll do that little thing."

He did. The inspector was gruff. Tommy said little, but returned his inquisitor's sharp gaze with one candid and fearless. He was told to "report again, in a week."

Saturday night Tommy went to the "block," intending to take Mary Malone to the "movies." He changed his mind. There was a letter at last from Sandbury which had been sent to Danforth and then forwarded from the prison in a plain envelope to him in Mary Malone's care. It had been opened and read. Across it was stamped "by mistake." Tommy perused it avidly. It was from Mrs. Upperly:

"Excuse me for not writing before. But Sam, he was took down with typhoid fever and has been in bed ever since. I am all tuckered out nursing him. I ain't had time nor strength to go through your things. But they'll be here, just as you left them, Tommy, when you get out. Sam says he sends his best regards and hopes you'll be a good boy, and so do I."

He turned gravely to the expectant girl.

"Mary," said he, almost brusquely, "I got some very important business out of town. But we'll be riding, in a short time, in our own limmyseen!"

"In yours, you mean, I guess," shyly returned the girl, her face coloring vividly.

"Good-by, Mary, dear, until I see you again," said he softly.

Then he hailed a vagrant taxi. He climbed in and drove to the railroad station before the furtive eyes of the detectives, Mc-

Govern and Marshall, ensconced in the nearby garage, could even glimpse its number.

"The young pup!" growled McGovern.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ENMESHED AGAIN!

TOMMY TREVOR descended from the train at Sandbury, which was a flag-station stop for the express he took from Grand Central, at dawn Sunday morning. He went directly to the house of Sam Upperly. Mrs. Upperly, looking very fagged with her night of watchfulness, admitted him. Her husband was "Slowly gainin'," and pressed Tommy's hand feebly in welcome.

She went to pour a cup of coffee for the visitor while Tommy sat by the bed. He told her, very briefly, of his parole and how he had come for the papers in question. Then he went upstairs and found his old "telescope," rather dusty, but otherwise the same as when he saw it last.

The stock was there. His hands quivered with triumph as he placed it in his pocket.

The next train to New York would leave about midnight. In the early evening Tommy took advantage of the dusk to stroll around the village incognito. There was a light in old Jake Holman's house. There was another in the bank. The sheen of the new safe was plainly visible across the street. Tommy passed a night watchman patroling the place, returned his "Good-evening" with a nod, and slipped back to the house along infrequented streets of the village.

He sat by Mr. Upperly's bed while his wife took a long nap. Then he awakened her, just before the midnight train was due, said good-by, expressed his hope that Mr. Upperly would soon be around again and walked to the station.

The ticket window opened at fifteen minutes before train time. Tommy bought his return ticket to New York. The station-agent eyed him keenly and when Tommy left reached for the telephone.

Just as the approaching train swept around the curve there came a fusillade of shots from up toward the village. Tommy peered around the end of the station as an automobile, volleying rifle and pistol fire, dashed past. Another auto was close behind. It, too, was firing, but the first machine outsped it. The train drew up. Tommy went to board it. The station-agent met him with a drawn gun.

"Put up your hands or I'll blow out your brains!" he shouted.

"What's the matter? Gone crazy?"

The station-agent fired. The bullet whistled past Tommy's head. He raised his hands. The train pulled out. At the point of the gun the station-agent marched him to the village lock-up. He sat there with him for two immortal hours. Then the town marshal came back from his futile pursuit of the men in the automobile. Prison had taught Tommy the value of silence.

"I got the one that was trying to make his getaway by train," boasted the station-agent.

"By golly—you did!" The marshal regarded Tommy with a singular malevolence. "I like your nerve," said he. "You're sure got one devil of a lot of gall to come back here and pull the same job over again, and not ten days out of Danforth."

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Tommy.

"Well, tell that to Judge Pullham. He opens court this week," said the marshal, thrusting him none too gently through the open door of the lock-up.

Next day he was taken back to Vonsbury and lodged in the same cell in the county jail. Outside it stood McGovern and Marshall. They too regarded him with the ferocity of two tigers yearning to rend him limb from limb. Meanwhile the metropolitan press flamed with his second arrest, and his friends on the "block" were again stupefied.

At noon, heavily manacled, he was taken in before Judge Pullham. Two indictments were read to him. The charge was "breaking and entering in the night time and grand larceny." Thus, for the first time, Tommy Trevor learned that the same bank he had once burglarized had been robbed again.

This time, however, the robbery had been complete. Every dollar of cash was gone. The crowded courtroom seethed with devilish malignity. Ferocious eyes fairly corroded him as they bent their gaze on him. Tommy Trevor stood as stoically as any martyr facing his end.

"Do you wish counsel?" asked Judge Pullham when Tommy had pleaded "not guilty" to the indictments.

"Yes. Send for old Squire Benson, at Sandbury."

Tommy was led back to jail. The sheriff brought him his noon meal.

"What in Tophet ails you?" he demanded of the prisoner. "Don't you know you ain't got a chance on earth, lawyer or no lawyer, after robbin' the bank a second time?"

"You are mistaken," said Tommy calmly, although a little wearily. "I didn't rob the bank at all."

"Why, you must be crazy," said the sheriff. "Wasn't the tools there—the old weldin' outfit, from Sam Upperly's shop? Wasn't the marks of your fingers on the tools, and even on the safe in a dozen places just like they was before?"

"Not my fingerprints," said Tommy stoutly, "for I never was near the welding outfit or the safe. How could they be there—unless they was the ones I made when I did rob the bank the first time? But I paid for that, didn't I?"

The sheriff stared at him. Then he said:

"And the night watchman seen you—right acrosst the street from the bank! That was just before the rest of that gang—the same gang that you helped git out of Danforth—knocked him into a cocked hat from behind and tied him up and gagged him. Why, you poor little simp, you're goin' to git life this time."

Next morning Squire Benson came to the jail. He nodded as Tommy told his story. The stock which Tommy had when rearrested was in the sheriff's safe. Tommy accounted for every minute he had been in Sandbury. But there was a gleam of doubt in the old lawyer's eyes as Tommy told of Mrs. Upperly's "nap" during the evening while he "sat up" with her sick husband.

"That's the weak point in the case," said he. "What was there to prevent you from goin' to the bank then? She wouldn't know it. She kain't swear you was there all the time she was asleep, you see—only when she went to sleep and when she woke up. And, my boy, how did them fingerprints of yours come to be on them tools and the safe? How we goin' to explain that? Don't you remember what the judge told you when you were sentenced for that same crime right in this same town. And he told you, after you'd bragged you'd come back and use them hands of yours all over——"

"I didn't!" burst from the prisoner's anguished lips. "I only said I'd use them better."

"Well, the hull county is boomin' with it," said the aged lawyer. "They said you made good on your brag; but you brought the rest of your gang with you this time, too—the same gang you helped to escape from Danforth."

"I never did anything of the kind."

"Tell me the truth, the hull truth and nothin' but the truth, Tommy," pleaded the old attorney, "fer I kain't defend you at all when you insist on tellin' such a passel of lies. Why, sonny, the sheriff's got the identi-cle rifle that was used to shoot Principal Keeper Roberts at Danforth down in his office safe—all wadded up in cotton batting—to put in evidence. They do say that you smuggled them guns inside the prison."

"No," said Tommy, "the trouble is, Squire Benson, I'm telling you the truth. You won't listen to the truth. Nobody will."

"Sonny," said the old lawyer, "your fingerprints is on the barrel and the butt of that gun. How in the world can that be, if you never handled it?"

CHAPTER TWELVE

"CALL DETECTIVE CARVER"

LIKE a man in a dreadful dream, unable to move hand or foot while a terrible fate hurries him to his doom, Tommy Trevor walked into court the next morning with the aged Squire Benson by his side.

Judge Pullham was on the bench. The formality of selecting a jury was very brief. Then District Attorney Wayne arose and began his opening address.

His speech was two hours long. He even cited from Judge Pullham's remarks to the prisoner, from the stenographer's record, regarding fingerprints, and he emphasized the statement that "there was not another pair of hands like that in the whole world!"

Then he concluded: "Gentlemen of the jury, we will show by the only incontrovertible evidence in the world, that of his own fingerprints, that the prisoner at the bar—this incorrigible young reprobate—even in durance vile disregarded the kindly warnings of a merciful judge! Even in prison his 'wonderful hands' found their criminal work to do. He smuggled in rifles that desperadoes whom he met and knew there might shoot down officials. Another set of indictments awaits him in that county when the course of justice shall have taken its inexorable sway here!"

"Everybody in the world," thought Tommy Trevor, "is crazy—except me—and mebbe Detective Carver. I wonder where he is?"

"We will now adjourn one hour for lunch," said Judge Pullham. "Gentlemen of the jury, you will not discuss this case with any one."

The jury filed out. No member of it even so much as glanced at the prisoner. Tommy Trevor knew then that he was already convicted—that whoever was hounding him had done their work with diabolic skill, and the devil himself could not have done it better.

He was barely in his cell when a shadow stalked down the corridor and a man stopped before the door. His keen eyes looked straight into those of the prisoner.

"Mr. Carver!" gasped Tommy. "Oh, I was hopin' you'd come. Yes——"

Carver put his finger to his lips. Then he glanced quickly up and down the hall. Next he whispered:

"Tommy, shut your eyes and put those wonderful hands of yours through the bars. Promise me not to peek!"

The prisoner complied. He felt the detective take one finger after the other and press them firmly against some hard object, after applying a coating of some sort.

"Tommy, whatever you do, keep your hands in your pockets and your mouth closed about this visit. Take the stand and explain why you came back. I'll see your lawyer, and your lawyer will see you through. What's his name?"

Tommy whispered it and kept his eyes closed long after the detective's footsteps had vanished down the corridor.

During the afternoon session Squire Benson interposed a few febrile objections, mostly technical, to the damning chain of evidence that was woven around the prisoner. Night came.

"I suggest an evening session," said the judge.

The district attorney nodded. The night crowd filled the courtroom almost to suffocation. The state closed its case by showing the rifle with which Principal Keeper Roberts had been shot. Three fingerprint experts followed the prison-keeper who identified it. A screen was set up. Tommy's own prints were shown, as taken in Vonsbury and as taken at Danforth. The similarity to those on the rifle-barrel and the butt of the weapon was satanically similar when enlarged photographic projections were thrown upon it.

"That is all," said District Attorney Wayne.

"May it please the court and gentlemen of the jury," said Attorney Benson, "the defense will be brief. I will first summon the prisoner. Tommy, take the stand."

Tommy was sworn. He was questioned briefly of his early boyhood, of his work in Sandbury, and of his previous conviction.

Tommy told his entire story this time and

produced his stock to prove it. The jury seemed more interested.

"What brought you back here after your release from prison?"

"I came to Mr. Upperly's house to get back my stock. That was all."

The Upperly letter was produced and marked for identification.

The district attorney asked a few questions.

"Do you know your own fingerprints when you see them?"

"No, sir," said Tommy. "I only know what other folks say. I'm just a toolmaker."

"Then you cannot deny that those shown here are yours?"

"No, sir, I cannot."

"Nor can you deny that those on the rifle-barrel were yours?"

"I only know I never saw that rifle until today, except when a man escaping was shooting with it at the principal keeper up at the prison."

Tommy followed this with a terse description of his occupation at the prison and emphasized that the day preceding the night of "the crush" was the first time he had been out of the walls without a keeper. He told of his phone messages and of repairing the coil for the X-ray. His description of the escape and the operation also held the jury spellbound. Some of them frowned, but others seemed impressed, for Tommy was always terse but succinct, and his manner was clear-cut and sincere.

Mrs. Upperly followed. She told of receiving the letter from the prison; of Tommy's visit, and identified her reply, which was read.

"I'm sure he never left the house," said she. "He was so nice and comforting. He stayed by the bed while I got a nice long nap."

District Attorney Wayne asked:

"How long did you nap?"

"I guess about three or four hours—only it seemed like a minit. I'm all tuckered out carin' for my husband."

"Trevor might have left the house and returned," said her inquisitor.

"He might, but how would he know when I'd wake up and find him gone if he did?" she replied.

The district attorney waved her from the stand with a smile. He had scored his point and seemed quite pleased with himself.

"Any more witnesses?" queried the judge of Squire Benson.

"Only one, Your Honor! Call Detective Bruce Carver of New York to the stand, please. I wish to ask him a few questions."

The crowd stared. Detective Bruce Carver, the famous sleuth for the associated bankers—the man who had previously helped to catch Tommy Trevor and sent him to prison solely on his fingerprints! What could that mean?

The room vibrated with a sudden murmur as the stocky figure of the famous sleuth, with his impassive face as calm as that of a Roman emperor, walked down the aisle, ascended the stand, and was sworn!

Then the silence was as profound as the grave when he began to testify.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"A DEAD MAN'S HAND!"

THE detective carried a bulky portfolio. This he deposited by his chair. He gave his name, his police experience, identifying the prisoner as one he had known from childhood. He told of his employment by the associated bankers, and that he had first come to Sandbury to examine the robbed safe. He dwelt upon the fact that the prisoner had taken, on that occasion, only $25,000, and that he could have taken ten times as much.

He told of visiting Danforth prison after the escape to investigate it, as all of the convicts concerned were bank robbers.

Under Squire Benson's questions he suddenly electrified the jury.

"Did you ever see this rifle before?"

"Yes, sir."

"When and where?"

"I was the one who found the rifle, about three miles from Danforth, in the woods,

where it was abandoned because it was empty. It was carried there by the escaped life-convict, James Wilson, who had shot Principal Keeper Roberts with his last cartridge."

The semi-moribund jury came to life with unwonted suddenness.

The district attorney asked the purpose of the testimony about the rifle.

"Oh," said Judge Pullham, "the rifle is already in evidence. This testimony is perfectly proper regarding it."

Carver went on, in a matter-of-fact way, to tell of returning it to the prison and of having the fingerprints developed upon it. Then he asked that the enlarged stereopticon prints on the rifle be shown again.

He pointed to them.

"Identify those of the prisoner," directed Squire Benson.

"I handle a good many fingerprints. But a comparison should show," said Carver. "I have here certified specimens of the fingerprints that were given me by the fingerprint department at Danforth as those of James Wilson, the escaped life convict. Also, I have had enlargement slides made from them for convenience."

He produced his portfolio.

He handed over the card with the name of "James Wilson" to the clerk to be marked for identification. Then he showed the enlarged photograph of it on the screen.

The jury gasped. The district attorney fairly shouted:

"Why, those are the official fingerprints of Thomas Trevor! There's some mistake here!"

"I am of that opinion myself," said Carver placidly. "But permit me, if you please, for a moment. James Wilson went to prison for life nearly twenty years ere Thomas Trevor reached its walls. How could a mistake be made? The fingerprints given me are those of the escaped bank-robber, yet they coincide absolutely with those of the prisoner at the bar, according to the record I took when he was first convicted."

"Please note that, gentlemen of the jury," observed Squire Benson blandly. "And, if you like, while this enlargement is on the screen, compare the fingerprints with the prison's officially stamped record on this card as those of James Wilson—and *not* those of the prisoner at the bar!"

The aged lawyer handed them the card. Each juror scanned it and then the enlargement. There could be no question but that the two were identical. Expressions of bewilderment and chagrin chased themselves over the face of Messrs. McGovern and Marshall, who were also among "those present," and that of the district attorney as well. Each juror seemed tremendously mystified and the prisoner was most perplexed of all.

"Anything else?" asked Squire Benson, after a pregnant pause.

"Oh, yes. Today, for purposes of my own, I again took fingerprints of the prisoner at the bar during the noon recess of court. There was such a mix-up in this matter of official records that I thought the jury should know all the facts. Here are the originals of his latest alleged fingerprints. And if you will allow me I will project the slide of the same, in enlarged form, on the screen for the jury to look at!"

The moment the slide appeared a fresh gasp of dismay was audible from District Attorney Wayne. Then it changed to a note of triumph.

"Pardon me, Squire Benson, may I ask the witness a question?"

"Surely."

"Are not these prints, Mr. Carver, which you say you took to-day identical with the other as yet unidentified prints shown on the rifle-barrel and the butt?"

"So it would seem," said Carver. "However, to remove any and all doubts, I have a suggestion to make. The state's experts are still here. Allow them to take the fingerprints of Thomas Trevor right now and let the comparison be made."

In fifteen minutes the prints were both taken and enlarged.

Again District Attorney Wayne seemed to triumph.

"Anyway, the prisoner's present fingerprints are on that rifle-barrel and the butt of the weapon, are they not?" he asked. "You cannot deny that, Mr. Carver, can you?"

"I prefer to answer your question by pro-

ducing another record—official, as well—from Danforth prison, and a duplicate of the same records from New York police headquarters. I have had an enlargement made of it as well for exhibition. Please note, gentlemen of the jury, and also Your Honor, that this particular record card is faded and worn. It bears the name of Herbert Long. You will note the date of his commitment to prison as well as the date of his death. He had no friends. His body was buried in the prison cemetery. He died in Danforth prison ten years before Thomas Trevor entered it. I am now referring to the second set of fingerprints on the gun-barrel, which correspond to Trevor's just taken. Throw them on the screen, please!"

Utter and dumbfounding bewilderment settled down upon the spectators—judge, jury and prisoner alike.

For the fingerprints of Thomas Trevor, just taken and developed, were, first of all, identical with the fingerprints of a man who had died and been buried in prison ten years before the prisoner had committed an offense.

Second, the fingerprints which had been Thomas Trevor's less than six short months before were all too evidently—as well as officially—those of the escaped life-prisoner and bank-robber, James Wilson, who was incarcerated twenty years before Trevor was likewise sent to Danforth.

Third, both fingerprints on the gun-barrel and butt were evidently those of the prisoner—and yet neither of them were!

At this juncture Judge Pullham leaned forward.

"I will suggest, Detective Carver, that you take the rest of us into your fullest confidence. You have practically acquitted the prisoner—I shall probably direct the jury to return a verdict of 'not guilty' on the indictments because of the statutory 'reasonable doubt.' But, to preserve their sanity, as well as that of the district attorney's—and my own, no less—let us have the real truth, please, about this extraordinary situation regarding these fingerprints."

"Very well, Your Honor," smiled Carver. "After all, it is a rather simple story, but a rather incredible one as well."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"SATANIC CUNNING!"

"AT Danforth prison the state employs a civilian to keep the fingerprint records," said Carver. "He is called, officially, a keeper. He employs a convict to aid him, and for some eight or nine years this has been a convict named George Loft.

"Loft is an expert engraver. More than ten years ago he was sent up for twenty years for counterfeiting money and forging check signatures, and twenty more for being an habitual criminal. His first sentence is about to expire, his second about to begin. He is a clever, suave, unscrupulous rogue.

"I first learned this when I had the fingerprints on the rifle I found developed to compare with those of James Wilson, who had dropped it. There was where Loft over-reached himself."

Carver paused.

"Loft did not know that I had previously caused Thomas Trevor's fingerprints to be made at the scene of the Sandbury robbery. He thought that Trevor was merely 'picked up' on local evidence secured against him. My profession of catching bank forgers and thieves and safe blowers has taught me caution. I never give details of how the feat is accomplished when I succeed.

"Thinking thus, when young Trevor, a mere boy, reached Danforth, Loft, burning for revenge and plotting to eventually escape himself, after aiding the others out, pretended to take Trevor into his confidence, after he had taken what he believed were the *only* set in the world of this foolish boy's fingerprints.

"Having access also to his correspondence, and, as well, the daily newspapers, he merely read the details of Trevor's crime which I permitted to appear in the public press ere the boy arrived, as said, at Danforth, and learned his friends and whereabouts in New York.

"Immediately Loft's fertile but perverted brain began fermenting. The escape—or, as they call it in prison slang, 'the crush'—had all been arranged for Wilson and his

pals soon after Trevor came. Loft was a trusty, but he could not go outside the walls. He overcame that difficulty, however, by a long bit of heavy wire, which ran from the window of his office to the rear of the wall behind the warden's house, where a thick clump of trees concealed his accomplices outside. He also mailed letters freely, and opened those for prisoners. Thus he carried on his surreptitious correspondence undetected with confederates outside the prison.

"The one vital point in his plan, however, was to get those rifles into the prison undetected. Being a fingerprint expert himself, Loft knew how fatal any trace of his own records, then in the prison files, would be if they were subsequently detected on the weapons. He had to work fast and under cover of darkness. He could not get gloves, so he hit upon a most ingenious and marvelous plan.

"Loft first took from the prison files a fingerprint record of Arthur Long, a man who had died in prison and whose body had been buried in the prison cemetery, as he had no friends. He photographed this, the same as any engraver would, in its original size. Then he etched this on a copper plate —here is the plate—for counterfeiting."

The detective dived again for his portfolio. He produced the bit of yellowish-red metal. It was neatly mounted on a block of wood and held in place by very small nails, whose heads were counter-sunk.

"Being a crude sort of a chemist as well, Loft, who had plenty of leisure for unsuspected experimenting, then hit on a quick-drying solution of gelatine—here is a bottle of the liquid he compounded. By painting his fingers, one after another, with this liquid he formed an artificial skin.

"Then," continued the detective, "by pressing each finger, successively, down on the etched fingerprints of the deceased prisoner, just before this gelatine solution finally hardened, Loft transferred to his own fingertips the marks of the dead convict. Once that was done, Loft could then handle any object, such as this rifle barrel, or its butt, with impunity—for no trace of his own unalterable prison fingerprints could be left on it. He did all of this, beyond doubt."

"How do you know?" queried Judge Pullham.

"Loft confessed to me, last week, when I confronted him with the card marked James Wilson, containing not only Wilson's official prison fingerprints but those of Thomas Trevor," said the detective, quietly, "and after I had worn a prison uniform for a week, and after the warden and the principal keeper and myself, at night, opened and read letters Loft was sending out to his accomplices and for the four escaped convicts. We always promptly remailed these letters, I may say, so that Loft's plans would not go awry, for we wanted to re-capture the escaped men, you see."

Judge Pullham bowed. "Please proceed, Detective Carver. This is a most interesting narrative."

"I did not open the package of fingerprints and Bertillon photographs and measurements of the four escaped men that Loft gave to me when I went to Danforth to obtain them," said Carver, "until after I was enroute to New York again.

"When I came to the alleged fingerprints of Wilson on the official prison description card, I immediately detected the substitution of Trevor's prints for those of that other notorious criminal, because Trevor's are very different from those of other men. I not only immediately recognized them, but I saw at once that there was an object in this."

"And the object?" asked Judge Pullham, tensely.

"Santanically simple and diabolically cunning," said Carver emphatically. "In the first place, remember, no one but myself knew that the fingerprints on this gun barrel and butt had been successfully counterfeited. I did not know that both of them had been, either, at that time, but Trevor's had been, I was sure. When I came to New York, and found that the other prints on the same weapon besides those that purported to be Trevor's were really listed in headquarters as those of Herbert Long, I was thunderstruck, for Long had been dead these ten years, as I have said.

"How, then, could his fingerprints be on the weapon that Wilson used to shoot Principal Keeper Roberts? Clearly, there were two motives: From the Trevor prints, it would seem that Trevor had aided in smuggling the weapons into prison. In fact, Loft, with his paranoiacal audacity, actually hinted as much to Principal Keeper Roberts ere Trevor was paroled.

"In the meantime, however, I took all these records to the Governor. I showed him that if Trevor had smuggled the weapons into the prison the one day he was permitted to go outside, unaccompanied by a keeper, that, even if that were so, Wilson's fingerprints—which we also have at New York police headquarters—were not on the same rifle that Wilson had used, but those other fingerprints were those of a man dead for ten years past—whose body has long since been assimilated by Mother Earth."

"That, I take it," said Judge Pullham, "was the inducement for paroling Trevor?"

"Exactly. The Governor and I, after conferring with prison officials, agreed that if Trevor was really at fault, if he should be conditionally paroled, that he would rendezvous with the four escaped men somewhere, sometimes, and thus by shadowing Trevor we might get track of these four desperadoes, then at large. But that, sir, was before I returned to the prison and began watching Loft."

"Aha, I see," said the judge. "So Trevor's presence in Sandbury, when the bank was robbed the second time, was purely a coincidence?"

"Yes, Your Honor. Trevor, most fortunately, was working in New York for me all of the first week after he left prison, but I did not see him, being on Loft's trail. Finally, when I learned where the escaped men were to rendezvous last Monday night, after pulling off some bank 'job,' although I did not know where the 'job' was to be pulled—and in this my deduction was very faulty, for I should have divined where it would occur—still, I was very sure that Trevor's prints would be left on the scene of that expected robbery.

"There, Your Honor, the perverted cleverness of Loft rose almost to the towering heights of genius. For with Wilson at large, expert, desperate, unscrupulous—and armed with Trevor's counterfeited fingerprints on an engraved plate and a bottle of this gelatine solution which lasts anywhere from fifteen to thirty days before requiring renewal—any safe robbery that Wilson would perpetrate would always be laid at Trevor's door!

"Thus Trevor, no matter what alibi he might be able to prove, would always be hounded by myself and the police of any city for the crime because of his equivocal remark to you, in this very courtroom, on his first conviction. Trevor said he had no use for bankers, and that when he got out he 'would know how to use his hands better!' What chance of escaping conviction for another's crime would he ever have had had not Loft overreached himself, not knowing I had also a set of Trevor's fingerprints?"

There was a moment of awkward silence. District Attorney Wayne and the jurors in the box shared it, equally.

It was so astonishingly new yet so amazingly convincing—although it was the first time in the world that fingerprints had ever been known to be counterfeited, within the period of judicial history that they have been used in trials of accused persons.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"STRATAGEMS" GALORE.

"I am nearly finished, Your Honor. I want to go back to Danforth in the mind's eye, and clear up a few details. I spoke of Loft and his wire. His accomplices sent the rifles along that wire on an endless rope, manipulated from the screen of the trees, outside the wall, late at night—for Loft had certain privileges, among them of remaining up until midnight, remember. Loft then concealed them in a closet with photographic material in his room for fingerprint records.

"The prison officials have since learned how they were next smuggled to the four desperadoes in the old east hall. They are

'take-down' models—that is to say, the butt may be removed from the barrel. Loft took them, one at a time, to Wilson, in bundles or packages, without suspicion. Wilson had charge of the bread barrels and passed out slices to each convict coming in at the evening to take to his cell, for meals are served in cells in Danforth.

"It was not difficult, therefore, for Wilson and his pals to each secure the four weapons hidden in this bread barrel. The ammunition was already in the cells. With the prison halls locked and all men counted, just before the final locking of the cells each plotting convict had his weapon. All four escaping desperadoes were 'hall men.' They worked at cleaning the gallerys and scrubbing the cells. When the guards went off the walls, and were in the guard-room, the four convicts knocked down the hall-keeper, and while one of them stood the company keepers in line with their hands up Wilson took all their pistols.

"Then they locked the company and hall keepers in the cells instead of themselves, and let themselves out into the prison yard, scaling the walls at different points with ropes. Wilson went north, the others south. Accomplices waiting outside aided their 'getaway' with stolen automobiles.

"All of this was kept very secret. Not even Loft knew details. All he knew was that his pals were not brought back, and so he planned to make his own escape later with their aid. Thus far I have told bald facts.

"Just here I must verge to deduction. All these desperadoes needed money. They had some, but they needed more. I think that Loft, after meeting Trevor, and noting his extreme youth and lack of worldly experience, not only planned to have Wilson use Trevor's fingerprints but advised the four men who escaped to again rob the same bank safe at Sandbury. I ought to have foreseen that. But I was so busy and—well, I was rather harassed, too, at the prospect of the system of fingerprint identification being knocked into a cocked hat, so to speak—that I overlooked this deduction.

"So, the same gang did come to Sandbury; and Wilson, armed with the knowledge obtained from Loft, who got the details from Trevor in their various chats in prison, went directly to the Upperly blacksmith shop and obtained the same welding outfit to use again. This time, however, they had to knock-out the recently engaged night watchman of the bank, as you already know.

"But with Wilson's expertness they quickly demolished and looted the safe, leaped into their stolen auto, and escaped the marshal of Sandbury and his posse. However, in so doing they only ran their necks straight into the noose of the law that I had prepared for them. They were to rendezvous at the place named in Loft's letter—in New York—preparatory to resting up ere returning to Danforth to aid him in getting away.

"I covered that place and with New York police assistance we took them all into custody very effectually on their arrival, and without any one being the wiser—not even the newspapers. They had the proceeds of the looted bank with them and we recovered all of that, too."

He paused and looked at the judge, who then observed:

"I congratulate you, Detective Carver, for preventing a sad miscarriage of justice as well as the tremendous aptitude which you exhibited in ferreting out what might otherwise have been an impenetrable mystery. I especially congratulate you upon apprehending the four escaped desperadoes and their unconscionable accomplice in the prison at Danforth. But there is one thing that I do not quite understand, and if you will explain that I shall be very much indebted to you."

He paused and the detective replied:

"I will, if I can, Your Honor."

"I can understand," said Judge Pullham, "how Wilson, with counterfeits of Trevor's fingerprints on that gun barrel and butt, left that supposedly infallible trace and thus jeopardized Trevor until you solved the mystery.

"I can understand how Loft, by using the same stratagem of the counterfeited fingerprints of a deceased convict, came to leave

the same marks on the same weapons, in order to divert all suspicion from himself. What I do not understand, however, is how Trevor's fingerprints, taken today and again this evening, should not be his own, but also those of the man supposed to be dead and buried in the prison cemetery—in fact, who is dead there for ten years last past. Can you explain that?"

"I was hoping Your Honor would ask me that very question, hence I did not include it in my narrative," replied Carver. "It is also very simple.

"For the first time, last night, I learned that Trevor was under arrest here, charged with again robbing the bank—and with the aid, this time, of his supposed accomplices, whom the newspapers said he had aided to escape from Danforth with the rifles smuggled in to them.

"Knowing Trevor to be entirely guiltless of both crimes, I hurried to Vonsbury, arriving about ten o'clock this morning. I found him already indicted and public feeling running very high against him. He was linked with a double-chain of apparently irrefutable proof to both crimes. I tried to suggest an error to District Attorney Wayne. In his zeal he scorned my effort to talk with him.

"So I had to meet this satanic cunning with cunning of the same kind. A series of very subtle stratagems had involved an innocent young man in a mesh of guilt, apparently without the remotest hope of his being extricated—even to me.

"The worst of it was his remark to Your Honor, about 'using his hands better' when he came out of prison. I had since ascertained his motive for his aversion at that time toward bankers. One man had taken advantage of his inexperience and had mulcted him of his valuable invention. That was why he spoke of bankers as he did when before you for sentence—that was why he refused to confide in me, at the time, because I worked for an association of bankers, including the one he had robbed.

"So I was compelled to have recourse to a little stratagem myself to save this boy. I visited his cell in the jail, asked him to shut his eyes, used some of Loft's gelatine solution and this engraved block of the dead man's fingerprints, to dramatically make it appear here, tonight, that Trevor's present fingerprints were those of a man whose body has been dust these last ten years. In no other way that I could think of could I persuade the jury or even Your Honor that he was not the guilty man."

Whereat, the crowd of spectators, long pent up, simply rose and cheered. Judge Pullham made no effort to repress it. He even participated in the applause.

Then he called for order, directed the verdict of acquittal for Thomas Trevor and stepped down from the bench to grasp the detective's hand, while jurymen and spectators alike all tried to do the same thing at once—all but one spectator and Tommy Trevor.

The spectator who started for the door was "old Jake Holman." And after him went Tommy Trevor. He was intent upon a "stratagem" of his own before the rest of them grew cold in people's memories.

He caught the fleeing banker who had "gyped" him.

He wound his lithe young body and his "wonderful hands" around the older man like a young python. Then he lifted up his voice and shrieked:

"I've got him, Mr. Carver. Here's the man that gyped me outta my invention. And you're goin' to pay me, without any lawsuit, Mr. Holman, or you're going to Danforth Prison your ownself—ain't he, Mr. Carver!"

It was a most dramatic episode to close a very dramatic evening, and its impromptu character added to its effectiveness.

Carver looked at the banker, to whom the youth still clung.

"Mr. Holman, I think there is little doubt that your 'sharp practice' was the mainspring to this boy's beginning a criminal career. What are you willing to do about it?"

"I'm a ruined man. My bank was looted," grumbled Holman.

"You're an old fraud!" howled Tommy Trevor. "Didn't you hear Mr. Carver say 'We got the robbers with all their loot in New York'?"

The crowd applauded. Some men with threatening faces closed in on Holman.

Detective Carver waved them aside.

"We've just got time to catch the midnight train to New York," said he. "Tommy already has his return ticket. You'd better come along, Mr. Holman, and talk this matter over with Trevor on the train, besides to identify the bank's currency which we took from the robbers."

"I want my stock," said Tommy. "The court's got it."

"The clerk of the court will give it to you," said Carver. "Come on."

"I'll buy your stock, at par," said Holman when Tommy unwound his lithe young body from the banker's figure.

"Not much," snapped the lad, "you won't. Not with Atlas Corporation stock booming on the sales of my invention. You gyped yourself when you gyped me, remember!"

About four o'clock the following afternoon, Mrs. Murphy, who had read of Tommy's "latest trouble" but not of his dramatic exoneration, was rocking herself in unison with the ticking of the little alarm clock, which she held tightly grasped in her hands, on the front steps of the Widow Malone's apartment.

Suddenly she burst into a wild wail.

"Wirra, wirra!" she sobbed. "That I should iver have lived to see this dreadful day!"

She wiped her dim old eyes on her apron repeatedly. Between sobs she fondled the ancient but stoical timepiece almost as warmly as if it were the touseled head of Tommy Trevor himself, when he had played years ago, a care-free street gamin, on the same "block."

The clock, no less, kept ticking on as remorselessly as if it, too, were "houndin' him."

Presently Mrs. Murphy dimly discerned the sheen of a resplendent closed automobile as it swerved sharply around the near-by corner, its siren sounding harshly to "scatter the kids" of a new generation, like the old, still playing "on the block."

Mrs. Murphy clutched her precious timepiece closer as the car glided directly in front of where she was sitting and stopped. The door opened.

The "al-larrum clock" rolled from Mrs. Murphy's fairly palsied hands, clattered down the steps and reeled dizzily to its demise at the feet of the young man who had left the automobile and who promptly stooped to pick it up.

He held it in his hand and gazed down at it, reminiscently. He shook it. He smiled, queerly, even when the clock's face stared up into his own, mute and with a silent second hand; for it had just stopped for the first time in all the years since Tommy Trevor had first repaired it for his now deceased mother.

Mrs. Murphy, one hand twitching at her apron corner and another drawn across her old eyes, stared as if she had seen a ghost—she, too, at that moment groping in a world where much is mysterious and past understanding.

The young man suddenly leaped up the steps to where she was, kissed her fondly, and in a quavering voice said:

"Niver mind, Mrs. Murphy! I'll fix it shortly. Besides, you should see the nice gold watch and chain I've brought you, for a prisint, in case the clock's hurted bad!"

Mrs. Murphy wept again, but this time from sheer joy, as his firm, young "wonderful hands" clasped her own. Then she lifted up her voice and called:

"Ma—ry! Ma-a—ry Ma—lone! Come quick and see who's here. The dear Lor-rd save us, if it ain't Tommy Trevor, his own silf, a-drivin' a brand-new limmyseen up to our very door. An' nobody's houndin' him, either!"

The Consolation Necklace

By BEN GROSS

"IT cost old Swanson fifty thousand," said Rodney Davis, peering from the taxicab at the blinking lights on the fog-veiled river.

"Yeh," sighed his stocky, chubby-faced companion, "funny how these rich guys fall for them actress dolls."

This philosophic, even if not highly moral, observation was inspired by the errand of these two employees of Bordoni's exclusive jewelry establishment. They were bound for the apartment of Florrie Minor, near the upper end of Riverside Drive, with a necklace of shimmering pearls which the lady had selected the day before.

Rodney was a newcomer in the Bordoni organization and fulfilled the double duties of salesman and messenger. No sooner was an important delivery scheduled than he was given the task.

"Just to give me inside knowledge of the type of people patronizing Bordoni's," was the way he put it. On these trips he was always accompanied by Dan Gates, the little florid, puffing man who for ten years had been the chief of store detectives. Considering the value of the rich cargos entrusted to Rodney, it was reassuring to have the companionship of so astute an armed guardian as Gates.

There was a bold gang of jewel robbers operating in New York. It was dangerous enough to house gems in one's vault, to say nothing of transporting them on the streets. Within the last few months several of Bordoni's wealthiest patrons had been robbed of treasures delivered from this exclusive establishment. Yet in all the years that Gates had been on the job not one cent had been lost in delivery.

"I guess fifty thousand isn't so much for a Wall Street broker," Rodney continued. "I've heard Swanson's to be married to some Long Island heiress, and that this is just his consolation gift for Florrie."

"Some consolation, all right!" Gates smirked. He had fingered the necklace in the delivery-room, before its satin-lined case had been placed in a blue cardboard box, swathed in several layers of tissue and wrapping-papers. "Anything else tonight?" he asked casually.

"Nope." Rodney shook his head. In his lap rested the precious package.

Both men had settled back in their seats. Then the taxi sped by a brightly lighted corner and Gates suddenly leaned forward, giving the salesman a questioning glance. An arc-light had flooded the dark interior of the cab and disclosed a suspicious bulge in the left pocket of Rodney's overcoat. The protuberance was unmistakable and so was the detective's astonishment.

If there was one rule of conduct impressed on employees of Bordoni's from the moment of their entry into service, it was the one forbidding them to leave the business premises with any parcels or packages of a personal nature. Even the executives obeyed this law. This article of the store code Gates could repeat word for word, as he could other sections of the little booklet of guidance issued to employees. Its violation was regarded as so heinous an offense that not in years had any one been caught disregarding it.

Rodney had evidently not perceived evidences of Gates's surprise, for he lit a cigarette and gazed with unconcerned eyes toward the orange glow of the Palisades.

"Nothing else, eh?" The detective repeated his query.

"Simpson says it's 'good-night' after getting the receipt," Rodney answered. The cab swerved into the driveway and drew up before the *porte-cochère* of a towering apartment palace.

Despite the suspicions careening through his brain, Gates maintained a suave calm as they were ushered into Florrie Minor's drawing-room. No sooner had they seated themselves in the dimly lit chamber of orange and blue than a folding door was opened by a liveried servant and the opening was inflamed by the auburn glow of Florrie's hair. The smile on her lips was seconded by the twinkle of her round blue eyes.

She accepted eagerly the daintily wrapped parcel and opened it with unashamed delight. Lifting the lustrous strand from its case, she held it aloft to catch the gleams from the lamp in a corner of the room. She pressed it laughingly to her bosom and then draped it about her curving throat. For some moments she stood before the French mirror, forgetful of the presence of others, with lingering strokes caressing her pearls.

"How beautiful!"

"They are, madam," Rodney agreed. Gates, too, approved with a nod.

"Were they restrung, as I ordered?" Florrie asked, lifting the string from her neck and scrutinizing the individual pearls under the lamp light.

"No danger of a break now," Rodney assured her.

He took the necklace from her hands and, with Gates's eyes sharply following every movement, shifted two lambent spheres apart and called her attention to the knotted strand binding them together.

"They're beauts," commended Gates, as he produced a tiny magnifying-glass and held it over the pearls. But even as he spoke his brow creased and his eyes glinted with the light of a discovery.

It was only by turning aside while simulating a cough that the detective managed to hide his surprise. He pursed his thick lips, while his heart pounded away with the staccato rapidity of a machine gun.

Dan Gates knew jewels. His years with Bordoni's had made an expert of him. He could distinguish the real from the artful imitation almost in a glance. He had fingered the original fifty-thousand dollar necklace as it was being restrung at the Bordoni studios. He knew them by touch as well as by sight. These were not the pearls Swanson had bought. This strand was an imitation—a good one—but an imitation nevertheless.

So that was Rodney Davis's game, eh? The dapper young clerk with the innocent blue eyes and the bland manner was playing for big stakes. Well, he'd have to reckon with Dan Gates, who knew a thing or two himself about the devious ways of the underworld.

"Mr. Davis, you're an expert on jewels," Florrie smiled ingratiatingly.

Rodney bowed abashed.

"I've some jade earrings, and before you go I would like to have your opinion of them," she explained, snapping the case on the necklace. Throwing wide open the folding doors, Florrie entered her pink boudoir, and in full view of the two men opened a tiny jewel vault above the marble mantel. She brought from them the earrings, which Rodney examined carefully, while Gates stood by, receipt book and pencil in hand.

"Worth about a thousand," was the salesman's verdict, to which he added as he and the detective left the apartment: "The little girl's made some clean-up in her time."

"Yeh," Gates acquiesced, "she's got more than one consolation prize."

Strange, he thought, that Florrie had not detected the substitution Rodney had worked on her. But, after all, she had seen the pearls only once, the day she had been in with Swanson and selected the strand. Then, too, he knew that hardly more than one person out of a hundred can distinguish a real from an imitation pearl.

The hired chauffeur, one whom Gates used for most of his delivery trips, jumped briskly from his seat and swung open the door; the mist of the winter evening had given way to a faint drizzle, causing Rodney to stumble as he stepped on the slippery running board. He plunged face forward, but Gates's arm broke the fall. Not, however, before a neatly wrapped package

had dropped to the floor of the car. Rodney moved to regain it, but Gates snapped it up and gripped it tenaciously.

"Yours?" he asked.

"Been in my overcoat for days," the salesman explained in a matter-of-fact manner. "Belongs to me."

Gates glowered and placed a pudgy hand on his companion's arm.

"Look here, Davis, think you can get away with it?"

"With what?"

"Ever hear of Rule Number 3? Or, to be plainer, don't you know that no employee is allowed to carry a personal package from Bordoni's?"

Rodney nodded.

The detective passed his trained fingers over the parcel and confirmed his suspicion that it contained a necklace.

"Another string, eh?"

"Just an imitation pearl necklace," Rodney assured him. "Bought it a few days ago."

"Where do you get that imitation stuff?" Gates accused. "It's the real thing! You left the fake string at Florrie's."

Before the salesman could answer the detective tore away the wrapping and opened the case. From the white interior he lifted a string of pearls. There was no light in the cab, but by the shifting rays of the street lamps he caught their lustrous gleam, as he coiled them in their satin bed before snapping the lid on them.

"The lady fell for it all right, but did you think I was as easy as that?" Gates demanded.

Rodney's eyes were fixed on some unseen object ahead as he sat in silence, bent forward, his intertwined fingers fidgeting. He breathed almost imperceptibly as one in a cataleptic dream.

"You're a clever boy," the detective continued, "but not clever enough."

Rodney gathered himself suddenly and retorted defiantly: "You can't prove that Florrie Minor's pearls are fakes. You're not an expert."

"Any one who knows pearls could see they're imitations," Gates snapped.

"She didn't."

"I said any one who knows pearls. But don't give me this innocent stuff." The detective gripped Rodney's arm. "What about this necklace here?"

"I bou——"

"Yes, you did! Well, you'll have to prove it."

"I can explain everything at the proper time. Anyway, you've no proof of anything wrong."

"None at all!" Gates mocked. "It wasn't wrong to deliver an imitation in place of a fifty thousand dollar string. It wasn't wrong to steal the imitation from Bordoni's. Sure, it was perfectly all right to try to get away with the pearls Swanson bought for Miss Minor. He pointed accusingly to the case in his other hand.

Rodney did not answer.

"Davis"—the detective touched his shoulder and his voice assumed a tone of sage admonition—"if you're wise you'll come clean on this."

"If I do"—Rodney hesitated—"you'll call the police?"

"I won't. We are driving to the store. There I'll call young Mr. Bordoni. He'll handle this and I can tell you now what he'll do. I'm afraid it's up the river for you," Gates spoke almost sympathetically.

Rodney buried his face in his hands in seeming horror of the thought.

"Gates, old man," he lifted his eyes and there was a tremor in his words, "it's no use."

"Now you are talking sense."

"You are too smart for me."

"Been at this sort of thing for ten years or so." The detective's tone was charged with pride.

"Couldn't you give me a chance to undo this?"

"How?"

"Let me return this necklace to Florrie Minor and tell her I made a mistake in delivery."

The detective drew slightly away from the young salesman and stared at him in undisguised admiration.

"Do I look as easy as all that?"

"No one would lose by it. Florrie would

get her pearls; then I'd return to the Bordonis the imitation string."

"Not a chance in the world."

"But——"

"No use talkin' about it," Gates spoke decisively. "You can't get out of this."

They had reached Seventy-second street and the taxi swerved with the unending procession of motors into the wide roadway. Within a few minutes they would be on Fifth avenue. There Bordonis' gray structure would loom into view. As the cab shot across the parked stretches of Broadway Gates suddenly emerged from a period of intense abstraction and pounded one of his palms with his fist, as if he had just arrived at a decision.

"Davis, my boy"—he spoke this time in a tone warm with compassion—"you're a nice kid and I'd like to help you."

Rodney nodded, half closing his eyes.

"What would you give to escape?"

"Anything you ask."

"We'll go over to a friend's apartment, then." Gates tapped on the front window and, after scribbling an address on a strip of wrapping paper, gave it to the chauffeur.

The taxi swung north through streets crowded with home-going shoppers and workers, into the apartment-dotted areas of Washington Heights. Rodney found himself in strange territory as the cab rolled across a Harlem River bridge and rushed past a neighborhood of small stores, dingy frame houses and tenement buildings.

Gates sunk into a moody silence during the long journey. To Rodney's pleas for an explanation he merely growled: "We'll talk later." He showed the first signs of recurring interest as the car halted before a small red brick apartment house facing the murky green heights of Crotona Park.

"Jump into the lobby, quick," he commanded.

Rodney complied, while Gates remained behind to pay the chauffeur.

The building was of the walk-up type. After mounting four flights of stairs, the detective led the day down a narrow, dimly lit corridor, turned a corner and inserted a key into the latch. They stepped into a hallway and then entered a little sitting-room with windows facing the park.

The door of an adjoining room swung open. Two men, one of them middle-aged, in a brown coat and slouch hat, and the other, a young man in a gray overcoat and cap, greeted Fates. He beckoned them into the hall and there the three held a whispered conference.

As the slamming of a door told of the two's departure from the apartment Gates re-entered the room. He drew up a chair to the circular table directly facing Rodney. Shaking a fat index finger, he blurted without preliminaries:

"You're a thief!"

Rodney winced under the accusation.

"No use beating about the bush. You've been caught with the goods, and one word from me, and——" He lifted his eyebrows significantly, the while fingering the delivery receipt-book on the table. "Here's Florrie Minor's signature for the necklace, but how long do you think it will be before she discovers she's been duped? The very first time Swanson sees the pearls he'll tip her off. Even if I'd let you go you wouldn't be safe."

"I could get at least a running start."

"Suppose she never gets wise? Sooner or later Bordoni will discover you've stolen the imitation necklace that you've palmed off on the lady."

Rodney moved impatiently.

"What's the point?"

"It would mean certain arrest for you with the imitation necklace in Florrie Minor's hands," Gates went on. "But suppose her string should be removed from her vault before she discovers she's been fooled?" He paused to emphasize the point. "You'd be safe. She'd always believe that you'd delivered the real thing to her. She'd report to the police the theft of a fifty-thousand-dollar necklace. In the meantime, before the Bordonis suspect anything, you could return to their stock this very same imitation string which has been stolen from Florrie's strong-box. It's all very simple, you see."

Rodney blinked in surprise, steadying himself as the details sank into his mind.

"In this way you destroy every shred of evidence," Gates continued. "When the storm's blown over Florrie doesn't suspect you, the Bordonis have lost nothing and we're richer by fifty thousand."

"But how can we get hold of Florrie's pearls?"

"I'll see to that."

"Sounds good. What'll I get out of it?"

"You're lucky to keep out of jail," Gates snapped. "I'll give you a thousand and a ticket to Havana. Better light out tomorrow."

"That would arouse suspicion," Rodney protested.

"What of it?" the detective demanded. "Within the next day or so you'll see in the papers that Florrie's vault has been robbed. You'll know then that you're safe, as I'll see to it myself that her fake string is returned to the Bordonis. If you don't hear such news, you'll know something's slipped. In that case the safest place for you is out of New York."

Rodney waved acquiescence, and the detective produced the black case from his overcoat pocket. He snapped it open and turned pale.

"Empty!" he exclaimed.

Rodney snatched the satin-lined box.

"Where is it?" he shouted angrily.

Gates turned his overcoat pockets inside out, searched the carpeted floor with his keen eyes and then gave Rodney a perplexed glare.

"It was in that case," he explained, "during our ride. Must have dropped while we were getting out of the taxi."

Rodney, his face darkening with the shadow of suspicion, stepped directly in front of the detective.

"Trying to double-cross me?" he accused.

The already florid face of Gates was tinged with an additional layer of crimson. Clenching his fist, he snapped angrily: "Don't you dare!"

"What d'you do with it?" Rodney persisted, recalling that his last glimpse of the necklace had been in the taxicab while speeding down Riverside Drive. He also remembered that not once during the journey had the case been out of his sight.

"We'll have to get hold of Joe, the chauffeur, and question him," the detective suggested. "Maybe he found it."

"Slim chance!"

"Can't tell. I don't think he'd have the nerve to make away with it."

"Suppose we can't recover it?"

"We're out of luck, that's all! Anyway, you'd better get a move on, now, instead of tomorrow. I'll give you two hundred and the fare to Havana."

"You said a thousand——"

"I thought we had the necklace, then. We may never find it now. If I do I'll send you the rest."

"Think I'll stand for anything like that?" the salesman demanded.

"You'd better—while you can."

Rodney paced the little room, halting for a moment to gaze through the window overlooking the park-bordered streets. Suddenly he turned on Gates:

"You've got that necklace!" he exclaimed.

Gates smiled defiantly.

"Search me, then! Run your hands through my pockets."

He drew his automatic from its holster and, dangling it in one hand, again invited Rodney to search. The latter, warily at first, then more confidently, explored the detective's pockets. Overcoat, coat, vest and trousers none of them yielded the precious strand. As Rodney's hand came from the depths of Gates's hip he paused, his alert eyes alighting on the weapon pendant in the loose grip of the flabby hand. With the deft certainty of an arrow crashing to its mark, his hand shot forward and clamped itself about the thick wrist of the detective. Before Gates had recovered from the shock of the attack Rodney, with a few dexterous turns, had snatched the automatic from the vainly resisting fingers.

"Come across, now!" commanded Rodney.

"I told you I haven't got it, you thief!" Gates shouted, his livid cheeks puffing with anger.

"Sit down!" the younger man ordered, and the bulky form sank into the creaky chair.

Before Gates could further protest his

innocence of deception footsteps were heard in the hallway. The door swung open and Gates's two friends stood on the threshold, their eyes wide in surprise. The detective sprang from the chair, but the gleam of the automatic brought him to an abrupt stop.

He opened his mouth to shout a warning, but the words were lost in the cavernous depths of his throat. He perceived that his friends were handcuffed to each other, and that behind them were two men, one of them the liveried butler from Florrie Minor's apartment. And bringing up the rear of the strange procession there was Florrie Minor herself.

"Nabbed 'em just as they were coming down," explained the butler. "They're old-timers, Robinson."

"Robinson!" Gates repeated, mouth agape.

"Of the Jewelers' Protective Agency," Rodney supplemented. "As are all of my friends, including Miss Minor. You see, the Bordonis hired us to watch you and we framed this job."

"That doesn't bother me," Gates spoke, with a show of bravado. "I haven't the necklace, and I guess my word is as good at Bordonis as yours."

"Oh, the necklace doesn't matter, even if it's never recovered."

"What's the shootin' for, then?" Gates asked with a forced smile.

"Just want you to come along and answer a few questions about a dozen or so robberies," Rodney spoke casually. "Strange, isn't it, that every time you visit a wealthy home to deliver jewels burglars should follow within a few days?"

"I don't know nothing about that!" Gates protested.

Rodney moved slowly toward the table and reached for the delivery-book. Gates leaped forward in an attempt to intercept him, but he was too late. The supposed salesman, holding its stiff covers apart, shook the book violently and from its flapping leaves a small white square of paper floated to the floor.

"How about this, Gates?" he asked, displaying the slip. Then, turning to the auburn-haired girl: "Alice, it's a good diagram of your rooms, isn't it?" She glanced at the marks on the paper. "Do you see, here is the hall, this is the drawing-room, and here's the boudoir," Rodney explained.

Her eyes gleamed with the light of discovery.

"And this——"

"The vault," Rodney announced.

Gates bit his lip and his finger-nails dented his palms as footsteps sounded in the hall again. Alice opened the door and greeted another detective. He had a firm grip on Joe, the chauffeur.

"Had to chase him," the operative said. "He's some driver!"

"Did you search him?" Rodney Robinson asked.

"Found this on him." The detective deposited a pearl necklace on the table.

Gates eagerly clutched the gleaming string, fingered it nervously, then threw it aside.

"Imitation!" he snarled disgustedly.

"Sure it is," Rodney smiled. "Didn't think we'd risk losing the real thing with a crook like you, did you?"

When Partners Part

By ERNEST A. PHILLIPS

DARTING down a dimly lighted street and swerving into an alley that loomed invitingly through the thick fog, with the sharp reports of a revolver barking in their rear, Chick Hartwig and Punctured-Eared Anderson lengthened their strides as they ran in the general direction of their den, some two blocks away.

"He plugged me through th' hand, Chuck," Punctured-Eared Anderson managed to gasp in short, choking words. "He drilled through th' bone, an'—an' I'm 'fraid I can't make it."

Chuck Hartwig barely heard, but he replied:

"Stick it out, Andy, until we git to the joint. I think they've quit runnin' now." He added the last words after hurriedly glancing behind him.

On and on they ran, summoning every ounce of energy and reserve strength they could command. At last they were rewarded by reaching the shabby-appearing house they roomed in. Puffing as they half-stumbled up the rickety front steps, they sighed heavily as they passed through the shadows that flickered along the walls from the sputtering gas-jet. Chuck Hartwig unlocked their door and Anderson staggered in, throwing his exhausted form upon the badly bent, unpainted bed that was theirs.

He held up his right hand with his left, and gazed at the ragged hole showing in it with bitterness inscribed upon his hardened features.

"He plugged me clear through th' hand, Chuck," he whimpered in agony. "Lookit here, two bones stickin' straight out."

Hartwig, pulling his coat-collar down into its natural position, once he was concealed in the safety of their room, carefully and almost noiselessly locked the door and stuffed the key into his pocket.

Then he turned to examine the wound Punctured-Ear had received, but just as he turned he saw his partner become suddenly limp, gasp for air and go off into a swoon.

Hartwig, wearing a sneering smile, walked to the side of his partner and lifted up his right wrist. He could see the jagged hole. The bullet had struck Anderson on the back of the hand and bored through, coming out through the palm. The bones of the middle and index fingers had been shattered and splintered, parts of them showing through both bullet holes.

As he stood there Chuck Hartwig shook his grizzled head slowly at what was passing through his whirling mind. He curled his lower lip and sucked his teeth. Well, why not carry out the plan that occurred to him? Nobody would ever know the difference.

Anderson's injured hand hung lifelessly over the side of the bed, blood still dripping from the two unprotected wounds.

As he looked into the pale and ghostly white face of his partner, Anderson, scratching about the wound unknowingly, caused Hartwig to jump. Then the almost lifeless form became silent again.

Hartwig looked back at the happenings of the night, and thought of things that had occurred during the five months he had been working with the inert form stretched out on the bed.

Luckily, thought Hartwig, his partner had stopped that stray bullet instead of himself. Well, at that it was worth it. Close to six hundred dollars in cash had they obtained in that little hold-up.

"Well worth the trouble it caused," mused Hartwig, remembering that his partner had been hurt and not himself.

"He oughtta know enough by this time to frisk these blokes for gats before stickin' 'em up," he whispered, as his wrinkled eyes narrowed and the thoughts he was harboring grew more commanding. "As it is, he mightta cost both of us our lives."

Hartwig allowed a half-smile to spread over his countenance. Why should he work with a man so careless as was Punctured-Ear Anderson? Why should he risk his life with an incompetent stick-up, when the country was flooded with experienced gunmen, men whom he knew paid strictest attention to the smallest detail when preforming their nefarious work?

And besides, thought Hartwig, as he uncrossed his legs and got to his feet, it would be an easy death now for his partner. All he would have to do would be to turn on the gas, leave the room, lock the door behind him, and Anderson would be taken into eternity while he slumbered in unconsciousness. At thought of it, Hartwig only wished he could feel certain that his demise would come so easily and painlessly.

By so doing he would not have to split on the night's haul. Then, too, he remembered the roll that Anderson had only that afternoon placed beneath the floor, under the badly battered bureau, after removing a decayed piece of board.

"Mustta been over a thou. in that bundle of hides he sunk," whispered Hartwig.

Fifteen hundred dollars! Hartwig licked his lips with his tongue and gazed at the gas-jet above the bed. It would be so easy. No possible chance of being caught. The police would simply find Punctured-Ear Anderson dead when they finally broke through the door. They would smell gas. Suicide was all it would be. They couldn't call it anything else. Then they'd see that punctured right hand. The mystery would be solved, and the case closed. Of course, figured Hartwig, those two men they had followed from the gambling-hall that night, and had stuck up some few blocks away, would report the hold-up to the police. Then the police would telephone every hospital and physician in the city to notify them if a man came in to have a right hand dressed with a bullet wound in it. This would convincingly establish the identity of the one who had committed the crime, and that would end the case.

Chuck Hartwig firmly made up his mind. Walking stealthily across the room to where the bureau stood that badly needed a coat of varnish, he shoved it gently to one side. Reaching under the mattress at the foot of the bed, he got the jimmy his partner had used in prying up the board, and some few minutes later he extracted an attractive roll of bills from the aperture and laid the board down without running the risk of driving the nails back. Shoving the bureau over the spot, he slipped the jimmy under the mattress and pulled the key from his pocket, preparatory to opening the door.

And then sight of Punctured-Ear Anderson's blue steel .38-calibre revolver caught his attention.

"Jus' as well take it along, too," mumbled Hartwig, carelessly picking up the instrument and stuffing it into his sagging coat pocket.

He slipped the key into the lock, turned it, and pulled the door noiselessly open. Walking back to the bed, he stood on tiptoe and, with one strong blow of his breath, the flames were extinguished from the gas-jet. As he lowered himself to his heels he could hear the escaping gas hiss as he withdrew from the darkened room.

Slipping out into the dimly lighted hallway, he pulled the door shut, locked it, and hurriedly left his unconscious partner.

Clutching the fat roll of bills within his trouser pocket, Chuck Hartwig, a grim expression written upon his drawn face, left the building and was swallowed up by the darkness of night and the fog that engulfed the city.

Hazy street lights blinked lazily, and he felt a light sprinkle that was refreshing to his perspiring body. On and on he walked toward the freight yards some six blocks away.

Hartwig had his mind made up. He would board the first freight out and beat his way over to Cleveland. There he would

ship on a Great Lake steamer for Duluth, and once the northern shores of Lake Superior had been reached he would feel safe. There, where it is always cool and comfortable during the sweltering summer months, he would repose idly until the biting frost of winter reminded him that it was time to start south again.

For Chuck Hartwig was something of a wanderer as well as a petty stick-up man. When roaming about he was always looking for work and praying that he would never find it. Now, with a grand and a half in his jeans, he need not look for toil, nor need he be afraid of finding it. With his money he could put in a pleasant summer, and enjoy life to the fullest extent.

Next winter—well, if things broke fortunate for him, he would try to spend the following winter in Florida. Buffalo had given him a stake for this summer and why should it not also yield a similar stake for the following summer?

Hartwig pulled his cap low and turned up his coat collar as he neared the freight yards. Gleaming lights from switch engines snorting up and down the massive yards flashed upon him every minute. On through the yards, between strings of box-cars, over innumerable railroad tracks, he went. He remembered the time, two o'clock, and in ten minutes, he knew, a cannon-ball freight for Cleveland was due to shoot out of the yards and hit the sanded rails. He would make that cannon-ball. He knew it to be a fast-stepper, a manifest freight that made quick time once she left the yards behind the blinking red tail lights on her caboose and sped out on the main line.

Passing what seemed to be endless strings of freight cars, Chuck Hartwig wandered through the yards. Switchmen glanced wonderingly at his slinking form as they signaled the enginemen they were working with. Here and there an engineer or a fireman, coming down the platform to go out on a run, stared in contempt at him.

Finally Chuck reached the long string of refrigerator cars that were made up into the manifest freight for Cleveland. He was surprised that no engine had been coupled to the front end, but the sight of a caboose with its jabbering crew inside coupled to the rear of the train satisfied him.

Half-way down the train he climbed up the side ladder of a refrigerator car and, crouching low, lifted the trap-door leading to the ice compartment. Down into it he slipped, his left leg above his head as he slid down. He realized the danger he was facing too late, and just when he reached for the sagging coat pocket containing the blue-steel revolver he had taken from Anderson, the gun slipped out, fell to the grating in the bottom of the ice-box and there followed a ringing, half-muffled report as it was discharged.

Hartwig uttered a cry of pain, and as he fell to the bottom of the ice-box a deadly fear swept through his veins—and he felt warm blood oozing from his right hand!

Before he could recover himself voices of running men, attracted by the shot, caught his attention. He could hear them climbing up the sides of the refrigerator, and then the yellow gleam of lantern light from above met his gaze.

"Here he is, fellows," cried the switchman who had found him. "Shot through the hand. Yep, that's it. Guess his gun fell when he was getting down into the refrig. Funny, isn't it, that it struck his hand instead of his body? One of you fellows better run down to the yardmaster's office an' call the police ambulance."

"Shot through the right hand, eh?" asked Night Captain Kelly at the Central police station when the ambulance driver made his report and asked what hospital to take the injured patient to. "That sounds queer. Two men were in here less than an hour ago reporting a hold-up. Said they fired twice at the pair who stuck them up, and one of them was positive he had hit one of them in the hand. Did you get his gun?"

"Yes, sir," replied the chauffeur, pulling the revolver Hartwig had taken from Anderson from his pocket. "Here it is, sir."

He handed it over, and as it was taken from the palm of his hand he felt a slight scraping. He frowned wonderingly.

Night Captain Kelly turned the revolver

over, and a smile swept through his aged face.

"That's him, all right," he said. "Part of the handle was broken off. See, it is missing."

He held up the revolver for the chauffeur to look at. On the right side, nearly half of the hard-rubber handle was broken off.

Night Captain Kelly went into his office, and returned shortly with a piece of hard rubber that fitted exactly to the revolver.

"No mistake about it. Those men brought this piece of the handle in as evidence that they had hit one of the stick-ups and it fits perfectly. Now that's queer, isn't it, that a bullet would go through a man's hand and break off a part of the handle of his gun?"

The chauffeur nodded.

"Take him to the receiving ward," ordered the night captain. "If he's only shot through the hand, Doctor Henderson can fix him up. I'll get those two men here tomorrow morning to identify him, and from the way it looks we have a clear case against him."

As the chauffeur departed the telephone rang in the captain's office. He answered it.

"A suicide, you say? At the corner of Hickory and Penn streets? All right, I'll send the lung motor right out."

It was twenty minutes later that Punctured-Ear Anderson, having been partially revived by use of a lung motor, opened his eyes in the receiving hospital, to find a soft-speaking nurse gently bandaging his injured hand.

Anderson rubbed his eyes sleepily and gazed wonderingly about. Where was Chuck Hartwig? Had they been caught, arrested, identified, Anderson wondered as he slipped back into slumber.

"What's going on this morning, Capt'n?" asked Jerry McLain, police reporter for the *Sun*, as he handed Captain Kelly a cigar.

"Sit down, Jerry," said the captain. "Just got a stick-up here who had over fifteen hundred dollars on him, and we had an attempted suicide. The stick-up is Chuck Hartwig, alias Fred Bigelow. We've nabbed him several times, but could never stick the evidence on him. Got him now, though. Been identified by two men. He's due for five years at least. I'll tell you about him later. Now this suicide, Punctured-Ear Anderson, he was found when roomers coming in late smelled gas. They broke down his door and it fell across the bed he was lying on, a nail that stuck through on the inside of the door tearing a big hole through his right hand.

"The boys worked on him several minutes with the lung motor and brought him to. He's out at Mercy Hospital now. They say he'll recover," and then Night Captain Kelly went on to explain the identity established against Chuck Hartwig.

"Good stuff, Capt'n," remarked Jerry McLain as he stuffed his notes into his coat pocket. "That'll make a darn nice little story. Something new is always turning up in this world, isn't it?"

NEW FINGERPRINT PLAN

THE Sub-Director of the Police Department of Copenhagen, Denmark, is giving instructions in a new fingerprint system to a class of visiting Police Chiefs at Police Headquarters. The new system is known as "The Distant Identification System and the One Finger System."

At the convention of the Police Chiefs in this city it was decided to install the new system in all cities, as a means of facilitating capture of international criminals. Heretofore the prints of all fingers were taken, but the new system calls for the print of only one finger. Each curve in the finger is numbered and is then put into a code. Officials who are studying the system say it will save much time in apprehending criminals.

The Criminal's New Enemy

By CARL H. GETZ

THE experienced criminal has a new enemy—the hand-writing expert—and he fears him more than the police.

Recently a guard was found dead in a little town in California. In his hand was found what the police said was a suicide note. But there were those who questioned the suicide motive and who retained Chauncey McGovern, of San Francisco, a professional hand-writing expert whose clients live not only in all parts of the United States but also in various parts of the world.

McGovern was asked to examine the note. All he did was to hold some iodine to a candle, causing the fumes to rise and cover the surface of the note. What happened? The writing was restored, which showed that the wife had killed the guard. The evidence was so conclusive that when it was presented to her she immediately confessed her guilt. She told how she had erased a pencil-written note, all with the exception of the signature, and then had written in a few sentences to suit her purposes.

It is not many years ago since the hand-writing expert would not have been permitted to make an examination like this. But to-day in cases concerning disputed documents the hand-writing expert plays an important part.

Not long ago Mr. McGovern was called into a case in California to prove that a certain will was genuine. Opposed to him was an array of lawyers and men who styled themselves "hand-writing experts" also. If it could be proved that the will was genuine it meant that a young man of twenty-two would receive an estate of $250,000. If it could be proved that the will was a forgery it meant that the money would go to the state.

McGovern was permitted to make an examination of the will. He examined it under a powerful microscope, and then took photographs of the enlargements or what he calls fote-micrografic picture. These pictures were taken into court, and ten minutes after the jury studied them a decision was given that the will was genuine, as Mr. McGovern had insisted, and the young woman was given her $250,000.

Court cases involving more than $25,000,000 have been settled out of court by the use of the McGovern process of examining disputed documents. He has perfected methods of reproducing pen-and-ink writing which has been eradicated by the use of chemicals. This is possible because so-called ink eradicator removes only what is on the surface of the paper, but it has no effect upon what is impregnated in the paper. With the aid of chemical fumes Mr. McGovern is able to get a precipitate, and thus reproduce the erased writing.

He is able to reproduce pencil writing which has been erased. When a person writes with a pencil, there is not only a mark on the paper which is visible to the eye, but there is also an indentation in the paper which is usually visible only under a powerful glass. And the most interesting phase of Mr. McGovern's work is that he has perfected a method of photographing what before could be seen only through a powerful glass.

The books of a certain California bank had been examined for nine years, and had been found so neat and accurate as to win a special letter of commendation from the examiners. But there was a shortage. McGovern was called in. He made a study of the books and finally produced photographic

evidence that certain figures had been "eradicated" and other figures substituted. The subsequent irregularities, which were discovered in the same way, led to the closing of the bank.

During the war McGovern removed ink spots from communications in such a way that the original writing covered by the blot could be read by the censor. McGovern also worked on documents on which it was believed there was hidden writing. And some of his discoveries were amazing. One foreign spy had written his message with milk, another with lemon juice, and still another with what is commonly known as invisible ink.

One of the interesting jobs which McGovern had assigned to him recently was to determine whether a certain criminal had written anything that might be used as evidence with which to convince him. McGovern unearthed such evidence by deciphering the indentations of the criminal's pencil writing on a second sheet. Photographed by a side-light, the identations could be seen quite clearly, but could not be read because of the indented sheet being covered with pencil writing. The process used then was to turn the questioned sheet so that its back faced the camera, thus obtaining a clear, although reversed, photographic negative of the indented writing. An enlarged print of the negative was then placed before the enlarging mirror, with the result that the writing was so plainly read that the wanted criminal was picked up at once.

Mr. McGovern's principal work has to do with wills, deeds, checks, and similar legal documents. But where the work of the hand-writing expert is probably the most valuable is in the study of forgery cases. The largest surety company in America, with its headquarters in New York, forwards its questioned checks to Mr. McGovern, and at the present time this particular surety company is preparing to prosecute an alleged forger upon evidence unearthed by Mr. McGovern, which, even to the layman, looks quite conclusive.

These foto-micrographic illustrations which the expert takes are frequently photographs of single hand-written letters, and the enlargements are as many as 250 times larger than the original letter. If a check has been altered—that is, if the payee's name or date has been changed—an examination by this gentleman will reveal it. If the check has been raised or lowered, his protograph will uncover the change that has been made.

It has been quite common for crooks to remove one endorsement and to substitute another. The expert can always detect this.

He has examined so many forged checks that he cannot understand why the public insists upon being so careless.

"Forgery losses are great largely because of the public's carelessness," said Mr. McGovern recently. "Then, too, the public has been influenced by the advertising and sales talk of the manufacturers of check-writing machines and safety paper. A check writer is a labor-saving device, and it improves the appearance of the check and discourages the amateur forger. But it has no influence upon professional crooks. Then, too, the check writer gives many people a false sense of security. A person who has heard so much about the infallibility of the check writer will be inclined to accept a check written on a check writer, when it should be remembered that there is nothing to prevent a crook from purchasing a check writer.

"The same is true of safety paper. This special paper is very good looking, and most reputable houses like to have attractive checks. The safety check also scares the amateur crook but not the professional. Not only can he raise or alter safety paper checks the same way he can any other check, but he knows that the presence of a safety paper check immediately disarms the merchant of suspicion who expresses a willingness to cash a safety paper check. Most safety paper can be purchased by any one."

Mr. McGovern is a great believer in the use of finger-prints. He declares that a finger-print will is a forgery proof will. Such finger-prints, of course, must be obtained with the use of acid-proof and alkali-proof ink. And they should be accompanied by the signature of the person making the will and the witnesses.

McGovern discredits the claim of the Los

Angeles expert who states that finger-prints can be forged. Milton Carlson, Los Angeles finger-print expert, traveled recently to Valdez, Alaska, to prove that Virgil Rich, a youth accused of burglary, was innocent of the charge. And he did it by proving to the satisfaction of the court that there is such a thing as duplication of finger-prints.

A few nights before Rich's arrest some one had robbed the store at Valdez and stolen a number of silver dollars. The robber cut his hand on a broken window pane, as was attested by bloody finger-prints found thereon. Rich was arrested when he presented a blood-stained silver dollar in a neighboring town. He had the strongest kind of an alibi to show that he was at home on the night of the robbery, but his finger-prints corresponded with those found on the bloody glass.

The prosecution introduced experts who testified that in finger-prints any six points of similarity between prints were enough for conviction, and cited several instances where men had been so convicted. Then came Carlson, summoned from far-away California by the defense. He introduced a finger-print from the book of Sir E. H. Henry, head of the Scotland Yard and authority on finger-print classification. With a picture from the great detective's book, Carlson showed the court that there were fourteen points of similarity between the finger-prints found on the glass and the finger-prints of a known person now living in London. Having no other evidence, the government's case collapsed.

Carlson holds that present finger-print classification and identification methods are entirely too lax for general use, and that 60 per cent of the prints of the world's people have similar points of identification. Unless there is some distinctive and unusual mark, he added, the finger-print is of uncertain value.

Mr. McGovern does not subscribe to these views. He believes that the science of finger-prints is an exact science, and despite the claims that have been made, he does not believe finger-prints can be forged.

The people of the country are still reluctant to accept the evidence of hand-writing experts. They insist that the work of the "expert" is largely guesswork. But in recent years the extent to which hand-writing experts have been able to influence criminal litigation has made its impression upon the police.

Professional criminals have said that the average crook hasn't a chance against the man who uses microscopes and chemicals. He is not so dumb but what he realizes that the hand-writing expert is essentially a scientist, and that the scientist cannot add two and two together and get six. He moves step by step and each time he is sure of himself.

There is no doubt but that the science of hand-writing analysis is still in its infancy. The possibilities of its development are unlimited. Mr. McGovern is demonstrating that every day in his San Francisco laboratory, where he serves clients from all parts of the world.

Although finger-print study has been reduced to an exact science, it is not proof against trickery. There are criminals all over the world craftily scheming to discredit the theory of finger-prints being infallible by forging them, and by resorting to various methods of throwing suspicion on prints that are considered genuine. An example of this trickery recently came to light in Europe.

The police of Berlin were making an examination of a vault robbery. Suddenly one of the officers called the attention of the other men to a perfect thumb-print which appeared on the door of the vault. The print was sprayed with a fine powder which brought out the lines sharply. It was then photographed several times and the negatives carried safely to headquarters to be developed and prints made. When the prints were made it was found that a perfect reproduction of a thumb-print was had. And what was particularly noticeable was that across the thumb was a deep scar as if the person had cut his thumb deeply at some time, leaving a mark for life.

"If Hans Merts were living I would say that that is his thumb-print," said one of the officers.

"I was thinking exactly the same thing," said another.

Just then the finger-print experts took the prints and began their examination. After a half-hour's examination and study of the records they reported that the print was that of Hans Merts, a notorious Austrian criminal.

"But Merts is dead and buried in Hamburg," said the officers to the finger experts.

"Can't help it," they said. "That print is the print of Hans Merts's thumb."

A month later there was a similar vault burglary. And once again a thumb-print was found; it was photographed and enlarged and again the experts said that the print was that of Hans Merts.

The police investigated about the "Hans Merts" who was said to have been buried in Hamburg, and the authorities there assured the police in Berlin that Hans Merts had actually been buried in Hamburg. There was nothing for the Berlin police to do. But the mystery made them terribly impatient, and when a third vault burglary was discovered, and the police had the same experience, the authorities at Hamburg were asked to exhume the body. The police there granted the request, but not without a protest. Two of the detectives from the Berlin force went to Hamburg and saw with their own eyes that Hans Merts was actually dead.

Then a fourth crime was committed and again the police found the same thumb print. Merchants were warned and many installed tear bombs to protect themselves against this mysterious criminal. Special burglar-alarm systems were also installed. Then one night the central office received word that a bomb in a certain building had been exploded and that it was believed some one had attempted robbery.

The police rushed there and on the floor found a notorious Austrian criminal. When he was searched it was found that he had a glove made out of human flesh, and that the print of the thumb had been carefully preserved. Later it was learned that this man had cut Merts's hand from his arm before he was buried. The fact was not discovered because of the padding in the bottom of the coffin and because only part of the cover was removed before the burial. When the Berlin police examined the body they looked at the face only.

The Austrian confessed that after committing each crime he had stamped the print somewhere where it would be noticed. He said he had noticed that when the police find a thumb-print they can't see anything else.

THREE ON TRUCK KIDNAPED, THEN ORDERED FROM AUTO

CARMINE DARENGELA was driving a truck loaded with fifty-five bales of raw silk recently from the New York Central freight terminal at Hudson and Eighth streets to a storage warehouse at Hudson and Charlton streets. The silk, which was valued at $60,000, was owned by R. Gerli of 119 East Twenty-seventh street. Seated on the truck with Darengela was Carmine Babbins of 158 Mill road, New Dorp, S. I., its owner, and his son, Anthony, 15.

The truck had reached Spring and Hudson streets when a touring car containing several men drew alongside. Darengela and his two companions were ordered at the points of revolvers to leave their seats on the truck and enter the automobile. One of the men from the motor car mounted the truck and sped away.

The touring car with its remaining occupants and their three prisoners whirled rapidly up town. Darengela, Gerli and his son were threatened with instant death if they made an outcry. When the automobile reached Morningside Park the three captives were ordered to get out and roll down an embankment. They obeyed and when they recovered themselves at the bottom the motor car was gone. They gave the police good descriptions of the bandits.

The Idaho Ace

By JAMES W. EGAN

A DUSTY brown motorcycle shot down Emberland's main street at high speed and came to a snorting stop in front of the railway depot. A girlish figure in man's khaki climbed from the machine and walked out upon the platform.

"Millie Garden's gettin' so she handles that thing as well as Tom," observed one of the chronic idlers lounging about the station. "She's a reg'lar little road burner!"

"Gals had sumpin' else to do aside ridin' them contraptions in my day," grumbled an elderly crony. "Dressin' in pants, and tryin' to act like a man! Bet she ain't so smart at keepin' house!"

"Aw, there ain't any better cook in Emberland, Jake!" rebuked the first speaker. "You're a back number, that's all. Tom Garden picked a swell girl when he married Millie Gates—and a pretty one, to boot. I guess it's all right with Tom if she wants to ride that dodingus."

"She's got nerve. I like a woman who ain't afraid of her shadder," remarked a third loafer. "Well, here's Number Sixteen pullin' in now, and there's Tom with his head out lookin' for the missus. She allus meets him."

Tom Garden, engineer of Number Sixteen, the passenger train now pulling into the depot, was looking for his bride of less than a year and Millie was as eagerly waiting to take her husband home. Emberland was a division point, the little southern Oregon town marking the end of Tom's run.

When Millie greeted her husband his fireman was with his. The latter was a stranger to Tom's wife.

"This is my new tallowpot, Mill," introducing the engineer. "Brude, I want you to meet the best little wife in Emberland or way points. Motorcycle Millie! She can control one of them two-wheeled cyclones as well as I can any hog the Pacific Seaboard owns."

"Pleased to meet you, Mrs. Garden," muttered the fireman, while Millie was blushing from her jovial husband's banter. The man's rather bold eyes swept her khaki-clad figure from head to foot. She was acutely conscious of his intent, appraising gaze, and she didn't quite like it.

"You'll have to take dinner with us some time, Mr. Brude," she managed to say, not very sincerely. The fireman's personality failed to impress her favorably.

"Thank you, I will," answered the stoker.

"Well, see you later, Brude," remarked Garden. "I'm hungry as a popeyed Russian, Mill. Lead the way to your noble but noisy steed. I'll hang on behind."

"How long is Jack Grant to be gone?" Millie inquired, making reference to her husband's regular fireman.

"Oh, that blood poisoning in his hand will keep him in the hospital another week. I've had Brude wished on me for a while. Not much of a tallowpot, and pretty surly at times."

"I don't like his eyes," asserted his wife. "They——"

"Better not let me catch you liking his eyes, or anything else, while I'm around," Tom teased. "Somebody told me he was a bit of a lady killer in his way."

Millie Garden wrinkled her nose at this, but took the front seat of the motorcycle in silence. Tom mounted behind. Originally he had purchased the machine for his own use, but his wife had grown adept at

handling it; so he was content to let her pilot him.

Several sputtering barks, followed by a steady staccato clamor, signalized their departure. Tom Garden lived on a small farm a couple of miles out of Emberland, and Millie whisked him home in record time.

"You can sure step on it, fair bride of mine," grinned Tom as they alighted. "You're a regular Miss Reckless, aren't you, Mill?"

"You said you were hungry, Sir Thomas." She accepted a kiss. "I left everything warming in the oven, and I'll have the coffee ready in no time—more or less. Supper will be on the table by the time you've washed your hands and face."

While serving the roast beef and browned potatoes, Tom recalled something.

"Oh, Mill! I almost forgot to mention that Ben Ferguson, our railroad detective, expects to drop in for dinner tomorrow. Saw him in Rosegrove this morning, and he served warning."

"That's fine! I haven't seen Ben for the longest time. What is he going to be doing in Emberland? Did he say?"

"Still working on those mail and express robberies, I guess."

"I wish they'd catch that gang, Tom. I'm awfully afraid they will hold up your train some night. You know that between here and Rosegrove there's the best chance in the world for them. And suppose they shot you, like they did Dawkins!"

"Those fellows don't often shoot the engineer, unless he shows fight; and I'll never take chances with bad men, honey. Of course this hombre, the Idaho Ace, is a bad actor. He did for Dawkins and got away clean. They say he can pop a bulls-eye every time. That crook can handle a locomotive himself, and maybe that's why he likes to put the engineman out of commission. I hope I'll never bump into him! But Ben Ferguson will land the Idaho Ace and the whole bunch some of these days. Leave it to Ben! He's smart!"

Ben Ferguson, the railroad detective, was one of Tom Garden's closest friends. On the engineer's wedding day he had done duty as best man, and was always a welcome guest.

"I'll be worrying until I know those robbers are all behind bars," uttered Millie, starting to remove the dishes. "Particularly that Idaho Ace. He must be a horrible creature."

Early next day the engineer's wife cycled downtown to get some fresh vegetables for the dinner. She met Brude, the new fireman, just after completing her purchases.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Garden," he smiled.

"Good-morning, Mr. Brude." She felt herself flushing hotly at his expression. The man's bold eyes made her ashamed of the convenient khaki breeches she wore and rendered her decidedly uncomfortable. She was relieved when he passed on.

Detective Ferguson, keen-eyed, firm-jawed and good-humored, arrived just in time for the noonday dinner. He praised Millie's cooking, assured her she grew prettier every hour, and otherwise made himself agreeable. Over the applie pie and cream the conversation turned to a series of train robberies from which the Pacific Seaboard had suffered in past months.

"Who is this Idaho Ace, Ben, and how did he get that name?" finally asked Millie.

"I have an idea he really is an ex-convict named Pete Gerome," responded the railroad detective. "He got the name Idaho Ace because he pulled off several stunts in Idaho two or three years ago, working alone. But I think he has cut out the single-handed stuff and became the head of the gang I'm trying to run to earth. Unfortunately, descriptions of the Ace are unreliable and mixed, but I am digging up a lot of dope on this Pete Gerome that may help me."

"Figure the gang is still in this part of the West, do you?" inquired Tom Garden.

"I know they are. Not only lurking about, but due to pull another performance pretty soon. I've a hunch that the scene of the next robbery will be either Twin Trestles—you know, about halfway between here and Rosegrove—or around the top of the cut, a couple of miles the other side of the Brent water tank. Trains can't do much but crawl up that stretch of iron."

"Oh, I hope they don't try it on Tom's run!" cried Millie, ever easily alarmed at the prospect of danger for her husband.

"Well, I ain't scared, Mill. Ben ought to look after me," said the engineer. "And now I got to find that surly fireman of mine and go to work. It's a long pull to Rosegrove. Staying in town, Ben?"

"Long enough to look up some matters. Several days, perhaps. Want to ride down in my flivver?"

"Sure," replied Garden. He went upstairs to change his clothes.

"Jack Grant back with Tom yet?" Ferguson queried.

"Not yet. He has a new stoker named Brude. I don't like him much," Millie answered.

"Why?"

"I don't like the way he looks at me."

"How can a man help looking at you, Millie?" Ferguson shook a forefinger. "Don't be down on a chap who shows good taste in girls."

"I suppose you want some more apple pie, don't you, Ben Ferguson?" sniffed Tom's wife. "You are so sweet I don't see how the robbers keep from surrendering to a nice old detective like you."

"Now, Millie! Wait until I get some pictures of this Pete Gerome I sent for. I suspect he's the Ace, and maybe I'll land that Idaho guy and restore peace and tranquillity to this section of the P. S. Then you'll be sorry that you picked on me."

"I wish you luck in that, Ben. When you coming to see us again?"

"Any time you have apple pie for dinner, Millie." And he poked fun at the engineer's wife until Garden was ready to go.

A week went by. Ferguson was at the Garden home for several dinners, and at one of them Brude, the fireman, was a guest. He was taciturn, and not particularly pleasant. He kept looking at Millie so much that she was nervous and out of temper when he left.

"I don't like him!" she cried. "He is too rude."

"He's a surly brute," Garden admitted. "I'll not invite him again."

"Jack Grant is a far nicer fellow," observed Ben Ferguson.

"I'll be glad to get him back."

Sunday evening found Tom Garden slated for a late run, owing to several cases of sickness. He was to take out Number Twenty-Two, leaving Emberland at ten o'clock.

It was a gloomy night. A cold wind was blowing, there was a threat of rain in the air, and the absence of moon and stars made things cheerlessly dark. Left alone in the house after Tom's departure, Millie decided to go to bed.

She had wound up the alarm clock, and was about to turn out the kitchen lamp when some one knocked sharply at the front door.

Startled at the unexpected sound, and conscious of her kimono and loosened hair, Millie Garden hesitated. The knock was repeated. She went to the locked door.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Ferguson—I'll have to see you right away," came the hoarse response.

Alarmed, Millie flicked on the light in her front room and made haste to open the door. A figure in a long raincoat stepped quickly inside and slammed the door behind him. As his face was revealed in the lamp light the engineer's wife uttered a little cry. This man was not Ferguson. He was Brude, the surly fireman!

"What do you want here at this time of night?" The words tumbled out wildly. "And calling yourself Ferguson! I——"

Brude smiled at her wrath.

"I wanted to be sure and get in—so I used your friend Ferguson's name," he answered smoothly.

"Well, you can get out just as quick as you came in," she flamed. "When I tell my husband of this he'll settle with you, all right!"

"After tonight your husband will be lucky to settle with anybody," stated the intruder, with grim finality.

Millie Garden started at the man in sudden terror. His eyes were glittering evilly, and there was deadly menace in his remark.

"What do you mean by that?" she said unsteadily.

"Let's go out in the kitchen where it is

warm and talk this over; it's freezing here," uttered Brude. "And no tricks, Motorcycle Millie! I'm heeled, and ripe for action!"

For the first time she noted the revolver in his right hand.

Scared and puzzled, she led the way into the kitchen. Coals were red in the stove. Without ceremony Brude threw in two or three sticks of wood and dropped into a chair.

"Might as well be comfortable while we can," he averred. "And you and me are going to have a nice talk, Mrs. Garden."

The look in the man's eyes frightened Millie. She drew her kimono tighter.

"Come, come! Sit down!" ordered the fireman, and something in his tone warned her to comply with the command.

"I want to know why you have forced yourself into my house this way? Why aren't you with Tom tonight?" she stammered.

"I'm through juggling a scoop—that's why," Brude replied. "And you ask me why I'm here? Well, ain't you modest, Mrs. Garden? Don't you realize you're the prettiest woman in Emberland?"

"You insulting beast!" Millie's eyes flashed. "Oh, if Tom were only here! He'd kill you!"

"Remember what I told you about your Tom!" Brude laughed maliciously. "I guess no fathead like him can stop me. Especially after what will happen to him at Twin Trestles tonight. He has some surprise party coming. The Idaho Ace and his gang will entertain Tom for a while."

"You mean—there will be a holdup?" Millie started out of her chair.

"I'll say so! The boys are all set at Twin Trestles and I wouldn't be surprised if some careless guy took a shot at the hoghead."

"Oh!" For a moment Millie thought she was going to faint. "And you were—you are one of the gang?"

"Just a cog in the machine." Brude smiled, and then his face darkened. "I was to have been in the cab tonight when it all happened, but that smart aleck of a Ferguson found out a few things today, and I decided not to show up. It is better this way. The Idaho Ace has given his orders, and your precious husband will get his. I'll join the boys after the robbery—and you'll be with me!"

"You—you——" Millie couldn't think of terms to apply to this cold-blooded scoundrel leering across the kitchen at her.

"Aw, don't get funny. You might as well get used to me now." Boldly he advanced toward her.

The next instant Millie Garden was fighting him off, and screaming—although she knew there were no neighbors close enough to hear her cries.

Brude grasped her, but she struck him in the face with her fist and wriggled out of his arms. Backing against the cupboard, she tried to drive him off with a volley of cups and plates. She threw everything she put her hands on. The snarling Brude had to retreat.

Groping in the cupboard, Millie's hands abruptly encountered a small, cold object. Instantly she recalled what it was—one of those little pistols filled with ammonia, to be used against vicious dogs. This one, she knew, was loaded.

Brude was just making a plunge across the kitchen when she whirled with the pistol and let him have its contents full in the face.

He cursed horribly as the ammonia burned into his eyes, and, blinded, he tripped over the leg of a chair and fell heavily against the front of the stove. Knocked out completely by this blow, he sprawled on the floor, blood oozing from a gash in his head.

One glance at Brude assured Millie Garden that he was *hors de combat* for some time to come. She was safe now. There wasn't any telephone in the house, but she could go to one of the distant neighbors and secure aid.

It wasn't of herself Millie was thinking. Her husband, Tom! He was going, unwarned, almost to certain doom. The Idaho Ace and his gang at Twin Trestles, hand and glove with the treacherous Brude, intended to do away with the engineer.

If there was only a way to warn Tom!

And, suddenly, a desperate idea flashed into Millie Garden's head. An idea only the nerviest and most reckless of her sex

could normally entertain—but Millie was far from normal at this moment. She was keyed to a tremendous pitch of nervous excitement.

Feverishly she tossed aside her kimono and tumbled into her khaki clothing. She appropriated the unconscious Brude's revolver and stole a look at the clock. Only a few minutes after ten. Time enough for her plan if she hurried, and luck remained with her.

Leaving the kitchen, she rushed to the woodshed and trundled out the motorcycle. Pedalling as hard as she could, she finally warmed the engine into life. Off into the night the cycle roared.

Rain had come and, mixed with the wind, splashed her viciously. It was a bad night to be traveling at high speed, but Millie Garden knew she had to make haste. Through the blackness, in the face of the wet gale, bumping, lurching, retaining her balance only by a miracle, she guided her barking machine and miles began to reel off behind her.

Tom's wife was attempting to reach the cut above Brent's water tank. Here, as Ben Ferguson once had observed, trains almost crawled up the grade. The roadbed was cut through the hillside, and high banks towered on either side. Millie's plan was to reach the cut before Tom arrived with Number Twenty-two, and, as the train pulled through the gap, to essay a perilous drop to the tender or the top of one of the cars. It was an insane, motion-picture-like stunt; but if she kept her nerve there was a chance of getting away with it.

The motorcycle slackened speed on the upgrade, and the rough road made the going hard. The wind and rain increased, water coming down with all the fury of a genuine Oregon storm. Yet Millie Garden stuck to her task. Uphill, through the mud, she forced her machine.

She didn't stop at Brent's, for she knew Number Twenty-two had passed. She could see the blurred tail lights in the distance. The train must be overtaken during the next two miles.

Despite a blow-out in the rear tire, Millie accomplished it. She reached the cut ahead of the train. As she deserted the motorcycle and scrambled through the few yards of intervening brush to one of the banks, some thirty feet above the rails, she saw the headlight foggily through the driving rain and heard the puffing of Tom's engine.

Closer came the train, moving slowly. Now the locomotive was passing below her. Breathing a prayer, Millie Garden leaped out and down, more than a dozen feet, to the tender.

She alighted with a jar that shook her senses and felt one ankle double up under her with a keen, shooting pain.

"Tom! Tom!" she screamed, and collapsed on the tender.

A few moments later she revived in her husband's arms. The train had stopped, and a curious group were gathered around the cab, including the conductor and members of the train crew.

"For God's sake, Millie! Tell me where you came from, and what has happened?" burst from her husband's lips.

Striving to shut out the agonizing pain in her ankle, Millie told of Brute's intrusion, the contemplated hold-up at Twin Trestles, and her wild ride. And then she fainted again.

"You nervy little devil!" whispered Tom Garden, kissing her cold lips.

They took her back to one of the Pullmans. A doctor among the passengers set her injured limb and gave her an opiate. So it was not until the next day that she learned what followed her brave and desperate feat.

The crew of Number Twenty-two had managed to telegraph Ben Ferguson. A posse was rushed to the scene, and more than a dozen robbers were rounded up after a short gun battle. Tom's train had been delayed for several hours, but P. S. officials believed the result was worth it.

Millie heard the whole story from Ben Ferguson as she lay in a cot at the railroad hospital at Emberland, waiting for Tom to complete arrangements to move her home.

"You got them all, did you?" she asked. "The Idaho Ace, too? He was planning to shoot Tom, you know. Brude said so."

"No, we didn't get the Idaho Ace at Twin Trestles," said Ferguson.

"He escaped, then?" cried Millie. "Oh, that's too bad! You should have caught him!"

"Oh, he was caught, all right," grinned Ferguson. "And he wasn't in any shape to give us trouble when we walked in on him. In fact, Mr. Idaho Ace was found sleeping sweetly with a gash in his skull in the kitchen of the Garden home, Millie."

"You mean—Brude was the Idaho Ace?"

"Absolutely and unequivocally. Brude is the Idaho Ace, alias Pete Gerome, and I have a little set of pictures that help prove it. Got wise yesterday, and then started looking for Brude."

"That's why he didn't go out with Tom! But he never let on to me that he was the Idaho Ace."

"He probably would have later on. Yes, his plan was spoiled a little when he couldn't operate from the cab and bash Tom from behind; still, I think he wanted to carry you away, too."

Millie shuddered.

"He was a beast. I never liked him. And to think, all the time he was the Idaho Ace!"

"A treacherous and cunning crook," commented Ferguson. "Had me guessing a while. But you landed him all by your lonesome, little woman. I suppose you know you are the heroine of Emberland right now. I'll say you deserve to be."

"I had to do it—Tom was in danger," explained Millie.

"That doesn't detract from the deed a whit. Tom will never quit bragging about you. Ought to hear him. And, by the way, the P. S. railroad has decided to present you with a thousand dollars reward for landing the Idaho Ace, I hear. What on earth will you do with all that money?"

Millie smiled a little.

"I guess I ruined one perfectly good motor-cycle last night," she said, "and I think I'll probably invest some of the money in a couple of new ones. They are handy little machines to have around, don't you think?"

FOUR MASKED YEGGS BLOW THEATRE SAFE

FOUR men, wearing masks and no shoes, surprised the night watchman of Loew's 116th Street Theatre, between 7th and Lenox aves., Manhattan, recently, bound and gagged him and then took the safe from the office, on the mezzanine floor, into the auditorium of the theatre, and blew off the main door with five charges of explosives. Before they got the strongbox, containing the receipts for Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night, open, however, something frightened them and they ran away without the loot.

About 1 o'clock Joseph Martizzio of 114 Webster ave., Long Island City, was sitting at the foot of the stairs in the lobby when the four men stole upon him. They gagged him with a handkerchief, took him to the balcony, where he was tied up with a rope, and one of the men was left to guard him. The other three went to the office, took the safe to the main auditorium and wrapped it with carpet ripped from the floor, to deaden the noise of the explosion. Five charges were fired, but they succeeded only in getting off the main door.

Martizzio managed to free himself two hours later and notified the police.

David Friedlander, the theatre manager, declared that $225.50, his personal property and that of employees, had disappeared. The strong box of the safe, which contained between $2,200 and $2,500, he said, was jammed by the thieves and could not be opened.

The Haunted Hotel

By JOE BURKE

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

FOR over seventeen years the Ghost House—so named by the few natives who inhabited the two adjoing towns of Hull and Swampground—had been tenantless. Left to the ruthless mercy of the elements, the somber old mansion loomed like a specter near the boundary line of the towns. Mysterious shadows had been seen flitting about the grounds and behind the shutterless windows, and strange cries had been heard, while ghostly lights flashed from the windows.

The mansion had been built nearly a century before by an Englishman named Clifford Titus, whose son after a few years of bachelorhood married an American girl. Of their two sons one was malformed and semi-demented. Dave, the elder, was a handsome youth, who loved his unfortunate brother. The affection was mutual.

Their father finally passed to the Great Beyond and the young widow brooded over her loss until Stillman Hillson came into her life.

Their courtship was brief, and one year later they were married.

Mrs. Hillson soon learned that the man she married was a gambler, a brute, and from the first he had evinced a hatred for the deformed Paul.

Dave Titus went to India when his mother died, and Paul was left at the mercy of his stepfather.

After years of neglect and untold abuse Paul Titus vanished, and two weeks later Stillman Hillson left for parts unknown.

Seventeen years later the "Ghost House" was in the grip of animation. Workmen were whipping the old place into shape again. Renovation had a startling effect on the abandoned mansion, and in due time the "Ghost House" was a ghost house no more.

A huge, gold-lettered sign had been placed over the arched gateway which led to the grounds, bearing the words:

GOODWILL INN
Pere LeBlanch & Samuel Drake, Props.

The resurrected derelict was again a radiant beacon on the lonely road.

LeBlanch was a Frenchman, a squatty, evil, beetle-browed individual. Drake claimed America as his birthplace. He, unlike his partner, was a clean-limbed man in the early forties. Their partnership was a strictly business proposition, and if the truth were known, terms of friendship did not appear on the agreement.

One night the household was aroused by terrifying screams coming from the room of a middle-aged man named Turner, a transient guest who had arrived that day. When the porters broke down the door, which was bolted inside, they found Turner senseless on the floor.

When he returned to consciousness he related an uncanny story that blanched the faces of the weaker sex.

Turner was awakened by a grating sound coming from somewhere at the darkened side of his room. Thinking that his sleep-dulled faculties were playing him false, he closed his eyes to resume his disturbed repose, when he was stiffened with terror by hearing shuffling footsteps and saw a dark, crouching form creeping towards his bed.

Unable to move to cry out, he stared with

popping eyes at the approaching figure. At the side of the bed the creature stopped. Turner could feel the hot breath of the prowler on his face as it bent over him. Then it scratched a match, peered into Turner's face, and mumbled in a crackling, gibbering voice:

"Not—him! How—much—longer?"

The next moment it turned and vanished in the semi-gloom.

When Turner found his voice again, he screamed for help and rolled from the bed onto the floor in a dead faint.

Drake and LeBlanch quieted their guests, and requested them to go to their rooms. All complied except a few of the men, who lingered to help in an investigation. A search revealed nothing to indicate that the room had been invaded by a mysterious prowler. The window, the only one in the room, was facing the front of the house and was found securely locked. As the room was situated on the top floor, even if the window had been open, there would have been no way to reach it except by the use of a long ladder, or to drop in from the roof. The latter method was impossible, as the intruder would be obliged, at the risk of breaking his neck, to slide down a smooth slate roof, hang by the gutter, and fairly hurl his body inside.

The door was also bolted on the inside and the transom was only opened about two inches. There was no other door in the room, which sometimes happens where two rooms adjoin.

"You say, Mr. Turner," questioned Samuel Drake, a faint tinge of incredulity in his voice, "that the figure emerged from the darkness, and vanished as mysteriously? Isn't it possible that you were alarmed by a weird nightmare?"

"Damn it, man," cried Turner angrily, "do you insinuate that I'm a fool, a liar, or drunk? I tell you, sir, that I was wide awake! Awaken my chauffeur, please; I'm leaving at once."

LeBlanch framed his mouth for a hot rebuke, but a cold glance from his partner halted it on his lips. He bided his time till Turner was fully attired. In the meanwhile a porter returned with the information that he had aroused the chauffeur and Turner's car was waiting.

"Before you go, Mr. Turner," said Drake, nodding to a porter to pick up his grips, "won't you try to describe the intruder as you say you saw him by the flare of the match which he lighted?"

"Certainly I will," replied Turner, with an involuntary shudder. "It was horrible! His tattered clothes reeked with the odor of filth. His head and face were covered with a mass of unkempt, snarled hair. It was hard for me, in my state of terror and the semi-gloom, to perceive everything clearly. But I did note that the man's hair, if washed, would have been white. His eyes were like smoldering embers of fire. And when he turned to go, I observed that he was a hunchback. That's all I can tell you about the unclean thing. Ugh! I wouldn't——"

The extent of what Turner would not do was drowned in the staccato roaring of the engine as the car rolled away from the front door.

CHAPTER TWO

TWO nights later the diners and dancers had either departed or retired at Goodwill Inn. Then a cry for help stabbed the stillness. Again the startled guests tumbled from their beds and filled the corridors.

"Room eleven," heralded a man in pajamas.

Samuel Drake, a huge revolver held tightly in his hand, was dashing up the stairs, three steps at a time.

At room eleven he threw himself against the door. It yielded as he turned the knob with his free hand. When he sprang inside he was confronted by an elderly guest who had arrived that day. He stood in the middle of the floor, his night-clothes torn to shreds.

"What's the matter?" asked Drake, just as LeBlanch arrived behind his partner.

Between gasps the mussed-up man startled the gathered throng with the following uncanny story:

He was awakened by a light flashing in his face, opened his eyes and beheld a repulsive-looking creature, with eyes like live coals, peering into his face. The prowler was unkempt and filthy, and had matted hair covering its face and head. Only for an instant did the thing stare, then it raised its hairy head and muttered in growling tones:

"Not—him! How—much—longer?"

The guest, who happened to possess more courage than the former victim, leaped from the bed when it turned to go and grappled with the strange intruder.

Although a powerful man for one of his years, he was no match for his ghostly adversary. The intruder made no effort to kill or injure him, merely struggling to escape.

"And," concluded the occupant of room eleven, "the filthy beast was a hunchback!"

The final revelation staggered all present, chiefly those who had heard Turner's tale.

CHAPTER THREE

"WHAT do you think of it, LeBlanch?"

The two partners were seated in their office after the angry guest had hurriedly checked out.

"Nosing," replied the Frenchman.

"There must be something in it. They both described the invader alike. Don't you think we'd better call in the police? If this keeps up, it'll close our place."

The Frenchman shrugged his broad shoulders. He peered at his partner, his black, beady eyes emitting a strange light.

"Ze ghost no keel heem," he purred. "I think maybe he drink too much whisky. We wait, Monsieur Drake. Maybe ze next time we catch heem."

But they did not catch the phantom.

Samuel Drake concluded that something must be done to lay the ghost and complained to the police, but they made no effort to interfere.

"Paul Titus's ghost," was their verdict. The town folks, every man jack of them, voiced the same opinion.

Drake was a fair-minded American, with a fair amount of common-sense. So he took upon himself the responsibility to unravel the mystery without consulting LeBlanch on the subject. The more he turned the matter over in his mind, the more it impressed him that it was not a joke, nor anything supernatural. The patronage of the hostelry had fallen off alarmingly and Drake went to town and sent a telegram. Instructing the clerk to phone him when the answer came, he drove to the inn. LeBlanch was not in the office, which was presided over by one of the porters.

"Where's my partner?" asked Drake shortly.

"In the wash-room," the menial replied. "He's met with some kind of an accident."

Samuel Drake waited to learn no more. He hurried to the wash-room, where he found his partner bending over a sink applying wet towels to his face.

"What's the matter, LeBlanch?" inquired Drake. "Run afoul of the hairy man?"

Pere LeBlanch whirled at the interrogation. His water-dripping face could not hide the deep, bloody scratches. For an instant he blinked and rubbed the water from his eyes.

"I hear noise outside," he explained, avoiding his partner's gaze, "an' I go to find out. Big bum he want some food. I say no an' he get mad an' we fight."

Drake turned away thoughtfully. The porter calling him to the telephone broke his troubled rumination.

"Boston calling," greeted his ears. "Mr. Donnelly wishes to talk to Mr. Drake."

Detective Edward Donnelly had received his telegram, and had answered by phone.

The talk was brief, the detective informing Drake that he was working on a case which he expected to terminate in a few days. He would come down, as the Haunted Hotel case, explained over the telephone, appealed to his love for unearthing mysteries.

CHAPTER FOUR

DETECTIVE EDWARD DONNELLY was a friend of Samuel Drake. He was an ex-Headquarters' man, who re-

signed from that eminent body of crime-hunters to engage in private investigation work. He knew every yegg, cracksman, dip, and every underworld denizen from the "Hub" to the Coast. Donnelly was a man of forty. His record for crime detection was a hundred per cent. Although relentless in his pursuit, he weighed justice in the balance at all times. Drake felt that the detective would afford him some relief and patiently awaited his arrival.

The next two nights were uneventful. On the third night, however, Drake, scantily clad, tore up the two flights of stairs with a big revolver gripped firmly in his right hand. What all-night guests there were had rushed out in force. Room eight, this time, was the seat of the trouble.

There Drake found a wealthy traveler, who but an hour or so previously had registered and retired, gagged and bound on his bed.

When released he told a strange story. Alike his predecessors, he was awakened by the hairy, malformed thing, which was muttering the words:

"Not—him! How—much—longer?"

But this time the object did not depart as silently as it did formerly. The victim was robbed at the business end of a big revolver and was tied up with bedsheets. After nearly a half-hour the guest had worked the gag loose enough to cry out an alarm.

Thus the props were knocked from under the ghost theory. Disembodied spirits do not flit about with shooting-irons, tie and gag, and then rob their victims and vanish in thin air.

Another consultation was held between the local police and the proprietors. Samuel Drake forced the issue.

LeBlanch was as nonchalant as ever. His characteristic native shrug was always in evidence. He raised his hands in feeble gestures, sneered and purred caustically:

"Heem drink too much whisky. Monsieur think we pay what 'e say he lose. Heem not have money. Bah!"

"You mean," one of the constables ventured, "that the gent tied himself up? That he took those means to bring suit later? It looks plausible. What do you think of it, Mr. Drake?"

"Mighty little," snapped the hotel proprietor. Every word he uttered snapped out like a whip-lash.

"I don't know what to think of you, LeBlanch," he roared, "but I do know that you're not acting fair. This thing has gone far enough. When I signed up with you as a partner in this enterprise you were recommended to me as a good hotel man. We leased this place to make a go of it. Now this damnable thing has cropped up and it bids fair to put us on the rocks—break us. Your confounded indifference to this epidemic of mystery has proven that you lax every fundamental principal in the game. Today is the fifteenth of the month. The last day of the month we dissolve partnership; you can buy me out, or vice-versa. That's all, gentlemen," he concluded with a forced smile, turning to the wondering policemen, "and I wish to thank you for the interest you've taken in the matter."

A box of choice cigars was tendered them as they filed out, to which they helped themselves.

Drake then betook himself to his room, where he mulled over the affair for the next few hours.

CHAPTER FIVE

DETECTIVE DONNELLY, the city sleuth, rolled up to the Goodwill Inn late the next afternoon in a taxi.

Pere LeBlanch was behind the desk when he entered the foyer of the Goodwill. The Frenchman glanced up and smiled a greeting to the newcomer.

"Bon soir, monsieur," he saluted amiably, his beady eyes appraising the detective's prosperous appearance.

Detective Donnelly, from behind the lens of his glasses, studied the man. Something vaguely familiar about the suave Frenchman aroused his suspicions. There was something vaguely familiar about the Frenchman's face, but Donnelly could not place him, so he returned the salutation with

a curt nod, registered as Oliver Chase, New York, and was conducted to room seven.

Inside, and the key turned in the lock, he quickly shed a silvery-gray wig and glasses. The room was on the middle floor, its single window facing the west. It was not unlike any other room which could be found in such an ancient mansion. Heavy walnut sheathing rose all around from the polished floor half-way up the walls, while flowery-designed paper ran from there to a spotless, calcimined ceiling.

There was no fire-escape outside the window; in fact, there were none on the building at all. He searched the floor for trap-doors, but found none. Then he sounded the papered walls with the same result. He was puzzled, although room seven was not one of the rooms entered by the alleged ghost up to the time of his arrival.

A light rap on the door diverted the detective from his examination. Hurriedly donning the wig and glasses, he lighted a cigar. Noiselessly he turned the key and stepped back.

"Come in," he snapped.

Samuel Drake pushed the door open and glided within.

"Glad to see you, Donnelly," he whispered.

"Who is LeBlanch?" Donnelly asked, after a hearty handshake and both were seated. "And where did you fall in with him?"

"He was introduced to me by my lawyer," returned Drake. "He claimed he had hotel interests in Canada, was plentifully supplied with money, and when he learned that I was a hotel man—well, we got together, and this is the result. Why?"

"It seems to me I've met him somewhere before."

"What do you think of the whole thing?"

"I don't know yet," confessed the detective. "I've got a suspicion, of course, but I may be away off on what I am inclined to think; on the other hand, it's a possible chance that my suspicion is right. By all means keep my identity from your partner. Also noise it about that I'm an antique collector, and carry large sums of money. Say that I stopped several times at the Thornside in Boston, when you were the owner, to account for our acquaintance. That's all, Drake; skip out now. Good-night."

Donnelly had his dinner brought to his room, and a book from the library. A few revelers who disturbed the placidity of the early fall night left in an aroma of gasoline and a swirl of dust shortly after midnight.

As the last tail-light vanished from view around the bend of the road, Donnelly locked the window, tried the door, then turned off the gas. The old mansion was not equipped with electricity. He removed his coat, vest and shoes, then crawled beneath the bed covering. In his hand at his side he held firmly a loaded automatic revolver and a powerful flashlight. Seemingly he was asleep in a few minutes, his stertorous snoring aiding the deception.

(*Continued in our next issue*)

KILLING HOROSCOPES

PLANS for the deliberate slaying of prominent residents of Coos county, with their families, were laid by Arthur Covell, forty-seven, a cripple, famed as an astrologer, according to his reported confession to authorities at Marshfield, Ore.

With his sixteen-year-old nephew, Alton Covell, he was held in the county jail after indictment on a murder charge in connection with the death of Mrs. Fred Covell, September 2 last.

The nephew, it is said by the authorities, confessed that he killed his stepmother while under the influence of his crippled uncle.

The confession, it is declared, tells how the youth, hypnotized by the bedridden man, crept up behind his stepmother on the morning of September 2, while she was at work in her kitchen, and clamping an ammonia-soaked cloth over her face, smothered her to death.

Double Death

By ARTHUR SEYMOUR WITT

FROM the moment that the doors of the penitentiary opened to swallow "Tiger" McAdams all his thoughts began to revolve around one fixed idea, vengeance!

Tenacious as a leech, this corroding mania accompanied every minute of the long hours of his imprisonment. And always its poisonous fangs turned menacingly in the direction of the "Tiger's" erstwhile pal, Tim Norton, who to save his own skin had squealed on him and sent him to "stir" for a long stretch.

Slowly the time dragged by—years that seemed eternities and which gradually undermined the iron physique of the man who was once a peer among his associates of the underworld. The demoralizing grind finally left him a mere rag of a creature, as gray as the prison walls themselves, shuffling and impotent, and rendered utterly unable to carry out the elaborate plan to "get" Tim Norton, which his hate had so carefully engendered during the early days of his imprisonment.

And then, after the ten degenerating years finally came to a close, and just as the gates of his living tomb were about to open his way to freedom, a new calamity laid hold of the already broken convict. He began to cough and spit blood. He grew hollow-eyed and emaciated and staggered in his gait. Finally the prison doctor was called. He examined the man and pronounced him tubercular—another hopeless victim of that terrible plague, the White Death.

This new calamity was the last straw. With it the only remnant of his murderous plan against Tim Norton was swept aside and in its stead his mind swung suddenly to self-destruction. Insanity, the passive, dulled variety known in criminal slang as "stir simple," shone from his sunken eyes.

So he brooded darkly, longing for death.

With the cunning of a madman he somehow managed to get possession of a knife that one of the trusties brought with his food. He hid it in the rags of his prison cot. That night, when all alone, he decided to end it all. The clock had just struck ten and he was sitting on the edge of his cot and on the point of using the knife's sharp edge, when like a flash an inspiration shot through his insane brain, causing him to lower the knife and stare ahead like a man possessed.

And then, as a great glare of red seemed to rise up and close him in, he broke out into a demoniac peal of horrible laughter.

"The dirty snake! I'll get him!" he mumbled in the next breath. And now, through some devil-genius, there began to germinate a new plan of revenge that immediately absorbed all of his remaining mental activity. Its effect upon the madman was miraculous; it seemed to lend artificial vigor to his well-nigh hopeless body. It gave him something to live for—to look forward to with avidity. He exulted in his new fortune. For even if he was so weak that he was little more than a child in strength he could yet revenge himself upon his betrayer.

And so he rubbed his bony hands in savage exultation and waited eagerly for the few remaining days of his imprisonment to pass.

Two days later he was given his freedom, and the erstwhile terrible "Tiger," now bent and broken in mind and body, shambled out into the big world once more and made his way back to that section of gangland where he had spent his youth of crime. And all the while he kept looking for just one man—"Nails" Norton.

One day while he was idly sitting on a bench in front of a soft-drink parlor, sunning himself and thinking the same old inevitable thoughts of vengeance, some one took him by the shoulder and shook him roughly.

"Well, I'll be hanged if it ain't the old 'Tiger' himself!" exclaimed a raucous voice. "How are things, old boy?"

It was "Nails" jeering him!

The broken ex-convict did not look up at once. In spite of his long training for this very meeting he knew that his face had been momentarily tortured into a veritable mask of hate. So he struggled inwardly to control his feelings. He would have to play his part now or else his chance of revenge was gone forever. So, instead of giving way impulsively and pouring a torrent of invectives upon his betrayer, he began to cough, which gave him a chance to recover himself and live down his natural inclination; after the coughing fit was over, he arose feebly to his feet and shook hands with the gangster in a friendly manner.

"'Nails!'" he cried in joyous greeting. "'Nails!'" And then he almost hugged the killer in his apparent joy.

"Just outta the stir?" asked "Nails," cautiously watching the old man.

"About a week ago," replied McAdams wearily. "It was a devil of a siege, 'Nails.' Never expected to pull through." He coughed again. "I'm done for, though," and he tapped his chest significantly. "I'm a lunger; can't hang on much longer. Almost ready for the croaker—maybe a week—maybe two——"

The killer looked mildly surprised. Could it be possible that the ex-convict had entirely forgotten who it was that had snitched on him and sent him to a living hell for ten years? Didn't he know that he was talking to the man who was solely responsible for his present condition? It seemed so. Long imprisonment must have rendered him "stir-simple," mused Norton.

Yet "Nails" questioned him cautiously for a few minutes. But finally he felt satisfied that there was nothing to be feared. The man was all in. He seemed to have no memory at all regarding the time when he was double-crossed; there was no danger to be feared from the old ex-convict.

So the gangster treated him as he would have treated any other half-wit. Before they parted he even asked the old man to visit him some time.

McAdams accepted the invitation, and within a week he was on fairly good terms with his betrayer.

But although outwardly an object of pity that even a hardened criminal like "Nails" deigned to help, he was inwardly perfecting his exquisite plan for revenge. Like a hidden snake he was coiling himself and preparing to strike his poisonous fangs into the heart of the man who had ruined him.

But the days that followed were terrible ones for the ex-convict. He was slowly dying. His almost constant coughing had become a tearing, ripping, lacerating torture. His vitality was ebbing away with remarkable rapidity, and he knew it and longed to die and have the misery over with, but always his plan for revenge buoyed him up.

And at last the day came!

"Nails" had trusted him utterly; he had used him as a go-between in a job that had been "pulled" by his gang, thereby convincing the old ex-convict that suspicion would no longer be entertained toward him.

He was now quite certain that he had the entire confidence of the gangster. He began at once to bait the trap. So, late one afternoon, feeling confident that all was going well, he dropped into "Nails's" room flurried and breathless with excitement.

"What's eatin' you?" demanded the gunman.

McAdams looked swiftly around and, edging close to the killer, dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Listen, 'Nails,'" he began with ill-suppressed excitement, "I just got an earful of info to make a hit with you."

"Spill it."

"Do you know 'Hog' Beamer?"

"Yeh, a cheap lush-toucher; but what of him?"

"And old Fritz Meyer?"

"The fence? Yeh, he's 'Hog's' uncle, a dirty tight-fisted grafter, with nothing but cush. But what's your lay? Spit it out!"

The "Tiger" bent far forward toward the other man's ear.

"I happened to overhear 'Hog' talking with Joe Larkin a while ago. Joe's his side-kick, you know. The two of them are going to cop the old man's shiners tonight and beat it outta the burg."

"The devil you say!" exclaimed the killer. His narrow eyes gleamed evilly as he clutched the other's arm.

Here a spasm of coughing seized the "Tiger."

"When's the job to be pulled?" demanded "Nails," his jackal eyes narrowing to mere slits. "Didja get that?"

"Sure, at eleven o'clock sharp," gasped McAdams, struggling to recover his breath.

"'Hog' is gonna rip the can and join Larkin, yuh say?"

"Yes, that's the plan."

"Where'll Larkin be?"

"Waitin' for him in a car as lookout a few block down."

"Nails" rubbed his hands together as a murderous look swept his features.

"Gravy, by thunder!" he muttered under his breath. "It'll be easy pickin'."

"I'd help you, 'Nails,' if I wasn't so far gone, but——"

The ex-convict was suddenly seized with a terrible fit of coughing. For a moment he was convulsed as he frantically fumbled for his handkerchief which he quickly clapped to his mouth. His face was like clay, and as he withdrew his handkerchief he stared dully at the large crimson blotch that stained it.

"Nails" merely looked on with unsympathetic eyes; his mind was busy with other matters.

"Oh, just leave that to me, 'Tiger,'" he said, reaching for his hat. "You wait for me here. I'm not goin' to stand by while those two cheap penny-weighters grab all them shiners and beat it; not by a damned sight. They're too valuable, and I need 'em. Thanks for the bit of info, 'Tiger,' and watch my smoke at eleven bells."

And then he was off.

The door had no more than closed behind him when the face of the ex-convict was suddenly distorted into the very visage of a demon. He clenched his hands fiercely, while a horrible light of exultation lit up the cadaverous face of the consumptive.

"I've got you now, 'Nails'!" he cried, as he hurried out into the street.

Fifteen minutes later he was closeted with Chief of Detectives Hudson down at Headquarters, for whom he was now secretly working as a stool-pigeon. After a hurried conference he shambled back to his room, where he busied himself with divers preparations; as he did so he anxiously looked at the clock from time to time. At half-past ten he stole silently from the room.

It was almost eleven o'clock. A pale moon shed a ghostly light, while scattering clouds hurried fretfully across the sky, occasionally blotting out the face of the moon.

It lacked but five minutes of eleven. At the corner of Elm and Fourth Avenue, where Meyer's pawnshop stood, everything seemed deserted.

But suddenly a dark, slouching shadow, the figure of a man, glided like a serpent from the doorway of the pawnshop and immediately melted into the blackness that clung to the walls of the building. In his right hand he carried a small, black bag. In another instant a second figure detached itself from the darkness and crept, cat-like, after the first, a large, black revolver clenched in its hand.

Apparently oblivious to all danger, the figure with the black bag continued to walk nonchalantly along, while the other, now crouching low, crept closer and closer upon him. Another moment and he was but a few feet removed from his quarry.

Then abruptly the first figure stopped and jerked his head around as though scenting danger. The crouching form straightened and sprang forward with a bound; a tongue of fire spat into the darkness; a sharp report rang out and almost at the same time the man with the bag gave a loud cry, flung his arms wide and fell to the pavement in a crumpled heap.

But as the murderer's hand shot out greedily to seize the bag a half-dozen police-

men leap upon him from around the corner and bore him to the ground.

"Hold him!"

The prisoner struggled furiously. But it was useless. He was soon pinned helplessly to the ground.

Some one flashed a light into the gunman's face.

"It's 'Nails' Norton, all right! And caught red-handed in the bargain!" It was the exultant voice of Chief of Detectives Hudson that spoke as he peered into the face of the trapped man in front of him. "'Tiger' McAdams told the truth!"

"'Tiger' McAdams!" growled the prisoner. "What the devil has he got to do with this?"

Chief Hudson gave a chuckle.

"He's the man who snitched on you and told us just when and how we could land you with the goods."

The man who had been ruthlessly shot down now raised his head with a dying effort. There was a great blotch of red upon his shirt front and between his blue lips a bloody froth was slowly gathering. His face showed ghastly in the moonlight as he fixed his eyes upon the murderer.

A look of amazement swept across the prisoner's face.

"What, is that you, 'Tiger'?" he cried. "I thought——"

"Yes," snarled the dying man, "I know what you thought!"

A sudden light dawned upon the prisoner. Then a terrible look came upon his face.

"What!" he shrieked. "Do you mean to say you framed this on me?"

A violent fit of coughing seized the "Tiger." Blood began to ooze from his lips. A tremor ran through his frame. Then a smile flickered for just an instant on his pain-distorted features. The next moment something gurgled strangely in his throat, his head snapped back and his eyes fixed themselves glassily on the dark clouds above.

The "Tiger" had gained his twofold aim—Revenge and Death.

A MYSTERIOUS THEFT

DISAPPEARANCE of $31,000 in Liberty bonds from the vaults of the American Exchange National Bank, 128 Broadway, some time ago, became known with the arrest of two men. Arthur Hubsch, 32 years old, a restaurant-keeper, was held by Magistrate Oberwager in Essex Market Court in $10,000 bail for hearing. Questioning of Hubsch developed the arrest later of Jacob Wolfner, 45 years old, a furrier, and he was locked up at Police Headquarters. Both were charged with criminally receiving stolen property.

Walter H. Bennell, vice-president of the American Exchange National Bank, said that bank officials were mystified as to how the securities vanished. The loss, he added, was wholly covered by the Fidelity and Casualty Company of New York.

When an inventory by the bank led to discovery that they were missing, the serial numbers were broadcast and one of the missing bonds came to the surface in the Federal Reserve. The bond was traced to a brokerage house on Broadway, and brokerage officials in turn reported it had been one of a block turned over to them by an East Side "chicken broker."

Hubsch admitted, the police told Magistrate Oberwager, selling first one and then ten Liberty bonds of the $1,000 denomination described as missing, to the Broadway brokerage house. He claimed he had got them from a man about whose identity he was at first hazy and later said was Jacob Wolfner. He admitted Hubsch had shown him $11,000 in bonds in the course of conversation, according to the police, but denied having given them to the restaurant-keeper.

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
53 "The Blackjack.' by William H. Osborne.
54 "The Whispering Head," by Chas. F. Oursler.
55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
56 "The Secret of the Sealed Book," by E. Rosemon
57 "The Clue of Steel," by Willis Lathrop.
58 "Alias Louis Vardon," by Wm. H. Osborne.
59 "Mystery of the Old-Time Club," by C. Bingold.
60 "Caught With the Evidence," by Ethel Rosemon.
61 "A Little Gold Spider," by Cecil Burleigh.
62 "The Velvet Touch," by Julian Darrow.
63 "The Clue of the Red Lamp," by C. F. Oursler.
64 "The Scheme of Solomon Snare," by W. Osborne.
65 "Quicker Than the Eye," by Ralph Cummins.
66 "The Clue of the Dark Room," by H. Craigie.
67 "The Tongue of Osiris," by Marc Edmund Jones.
68 "Detective Wade's Big Case," by E. Rosemon.
69 "The Spirit Bell," by Charles Fulton Oursler.
70 "The House Behind the Wall," by Julian Darrow.
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73 "The Psychic Enemy," by Arthur Wm. Anderson.
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75 "On the Wrong Trail," by Ethel Rosemon.
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78 "The Stolen Year," by Edmund Elliot.
79 "The Affair at Hollywood House," by W. Kofoed.
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82 "Who Killed McNally?" by Beulah Poynter.
83 "The Clue of the Whorl," by Katherine Stagg.
84 "The 'Czar' and the Ring," by Edmund Elliot.
85 "The Clue of Flame," by Jack Bechdolt.
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116 "The Girl in the Case," by Carl Glick.
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142 "Blood Rubies," by J. Werner Phelps.
143 "I'll Win! I'll Win!" by Arthur B. Reeve and Margaret W. Reeve.
144 "Phantom Fingers," by George Bronson-Howard.
145 "On the Yellows," by Frank Blighton.
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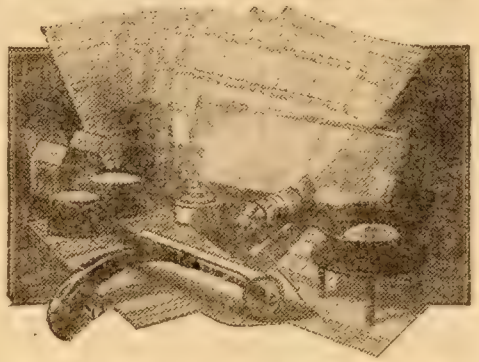

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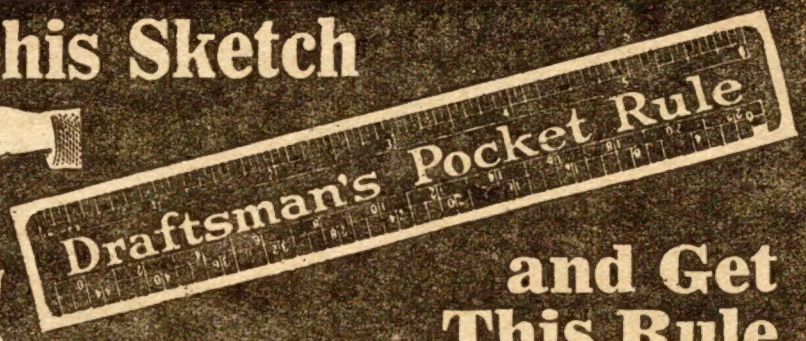

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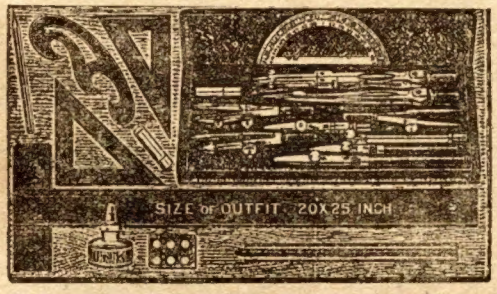

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